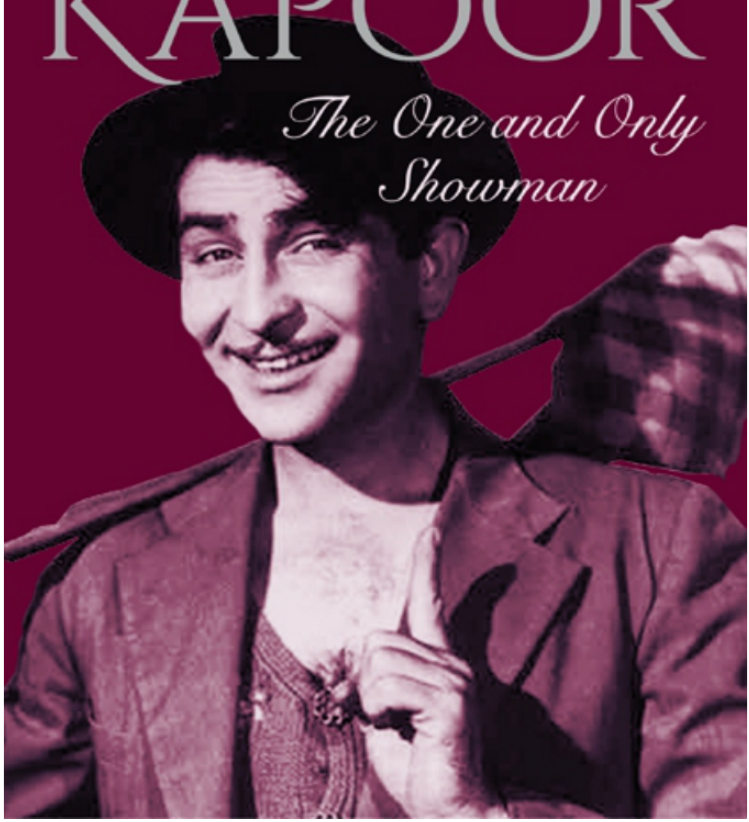
RAJ KAPOOR

PRESENTED BY HIS DAUGHTER
RITU NANDA

The One and Only Showman



RAJ KAPOOR

आर.के.स्टूडियो
R.K.FILMS
&.STUDIOS
CHEMBUR

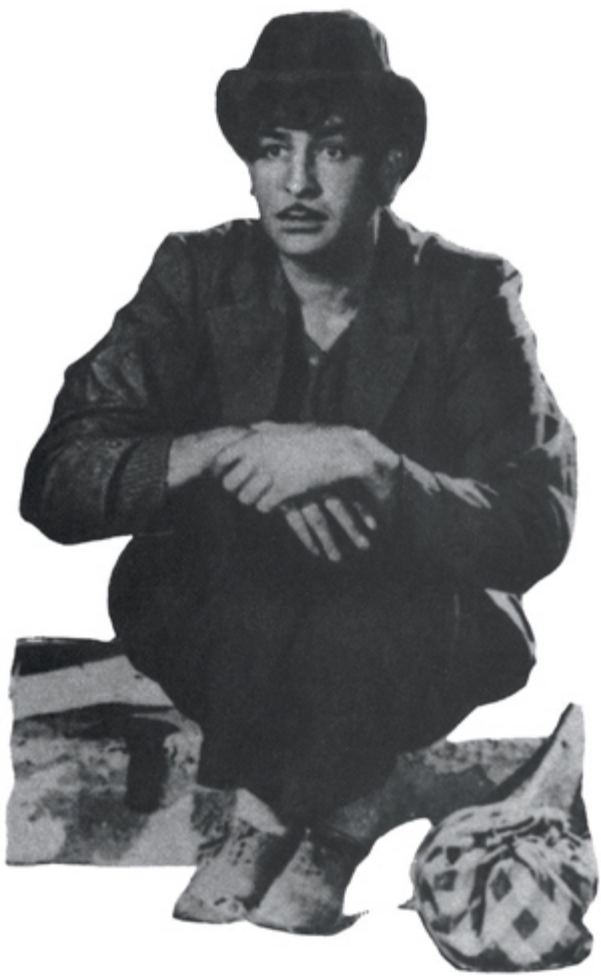
RAJ KAPOOR
THE ONE AND ONLY SHOWMAN

Presented by his daughter Ritu Nanda

HarperCollins *Publishers* India

This book is dedicated to my mother who, like her children, believes that Raj Kapoor is a man who cannot die.

'A lot of work of every artiste, of anyone in any creative profession, is somewhat autobiographical ... Something of his experience is always attached to it, it remains there and one brings it out in one form or another. That is how it is.'



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PREFACE

Ritu Nanda

Raj Kapoor is many things to many people: producer, director, actor, editor, musician, storyteller, a man of many moods and an acknowledged patriarch of India's film industry. He is also known to the world as an extraordinary showman, a lover, an idealist, a sage and a reformer. Papa was not particularly well read, nor did he consider film an intellectual medium. He was a romantic and his reaction to socio-economic inequity and injustice was emotional rather than intellectual. He believed firmly that the paying public went to the theatres to be entertained and not to listen to social or political sermons. He also realized the potential of popular cinema to address social issues effectively. He evolved an approach by which he succeeded in influencing as many people as he entertained. Raj Kapoor's command over the art enthralled him to produce some of the most watched films anywhere in the history of the medium. Hindi cinema is so popular these days that we forget, it once was not. Raj Kapoor didn't just make films, he made the mainstream Indian film audience before the term 'Bollywood' was even a glint in a marketer's eye. This is not to say he didn't also make flops. Two of his favourite films, *Aah* and *Mera Naam Joker*, tanked. Though he loved them a little more, the audiences loved them less. But when he hit a success, he hit big, by bringing romance, sexuality, song and soul to Indian socialism in its heyday.

The world of Hindi films was also a means of education and exposure in a country where the literacy rate at the time of Independence was 18 per cent. So, cinema was an important medium of religious, cultural and political education. A truck would move from village to village with a projector and a rolled-up film. The vision that Papa staged and sang was not provincial, it was recognizably Nehru's India, featuring an urbanizing, modernizing milieu. Behind his yearning, moist-eyed heroines and sometimes slapstick comedy was often a cheerful nagging that promises made to the poor be made good. Raj Kapoor had a keen eye for tiny deprivations that dash the spirits of the unprivileged. In a telling moment from *Boot Polish*, the camera pans down a long line of people waiting for rations. It's a glimpse of a country's have-nots, united in need. Suddenly, though, the rain starts, and the class of need divides again, there are those who pull out umbrellas and those who get thoroughly drenched. The humiliation of the poorest makes you cringe, but this being a Raj Kapoor film, it also makes you laugh, and soon enough there's a good song. The solutions he suggested to a collective, post-Independence let-down, had little to do with politics and a lot to do with love. As much as that tendency would frustrate his more political collaborators, it would introduce Indian cinema to the world.

It was in 1948, when he was barely twenty-three, that Papa released his first film, the low-budget *Aag*. The emotional intensity of this film, its technical daring and sensitivity announced the arrival of an unusual talent in Indian cinema. It was also the beginning of the most famous and enduring screen association of Raj Kapoor and Nargis. The film is episodic and narrates in flashback the story of a theatre producer (Raj Kapoor) and the three women who enter his life at

different periods. Commercially the film was a moderate success, but *Barsaat* (1949), Raj Kapoor's next film, was a blockbuster. Although a commonplace story, what made it so popular was its haunting music, youthful exuberance and relatively open attitude towards sex.

In 1952, Papa bought the script of *Awara* from K.A. Abbas. The film, an astonishing mixture of melodrama and romance, seduced audiences not just in India, but also in the Middle East, Iran, Turkey, China and the former Soviet Union. In post-World War II, post-Partition India, when the entire socio-political system was under strain and thousands of migrants were pouring into the cities, millions identified with Raj Kapoor's dispossessed hero Raju. The tramp of *Awara* reappeared in *Shree 420*, but with a difference. The film is a fascinating study of his transformation from the naive country lad to the city slicker.

Jagte Raho (1956) was a less effective variation on the same theme of the simple man in the big, bad world. The film won the Grand Prix at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 1957, but did not fare well at the box office. It also marked the end of Nargis's association with Raj Kapoor.

The theme of *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai* (1960) was inspired by the Gandhian pacifist Vinoba Bhave, who had just appealed to the dacoits operating in the ravines of central India to surrender, to which some had responded positively. This message had a deep relevance and appeal to the period in which the film was made and proved to the world that even hardened criminals can mend their ways when approached with a sympathetic and productive vision.

In 1964, Papa went to Europe for his super production *Sangam*. Shot in locations as varied as London, Paris, Venice and Switzerland, it was his first foray into colour and he did it with typical fastidiousness. The film was obviously designed by the maker to be a visual seduction all the way, dripping with glamour. Film-makers world over have been at pains to prove that Rudyard Kipling, who said that 'east is east and west is west and never the twain shall meet', should have known better. In India, it was left to Raj Kapoor to explore the Kipling myth with spectacular results. That is the achievement of *Sangam* (literally, confluence), which attempts and accomplishes a fusion not only of the East and the West but also of art and entertainment. It was Ernst Lubitsch, master comedy maker, who once said that 'no man is a genius unless he can deliver honest entertainment'. Papa's genius as a creative craftsman and an honest, solid entertainer was never better reflected than in *Sangam*, which he directed and which also marked his debut as an editor.

In *Mera Naam Joker* (1970), we rediscover the tramp as the circus clown. This was Papa's most ambitious film and his longest production, all of four hours and fifteen minutes! He brought to India an entire 'Russian Circus' and the Bolshoi ballerina Kseniya Ryabinkina to star in the film. The film is structured in three chapters, focusing on a clown's last performance. In flashback, we see the struggle and the sorrow of the clown's life. It was the most expensive film of its time and upon its release became the biggest flop of Indian motion pictures. It was a film made ahead of its time because ten years later, Papa re-edited the

film, making it shorter and the same flop became a big success.

After the financial debacle of *Mera Naam Joker*, Raj Kapoor made a strikingly successful comeback with *Bobby* (1973). He cast his son Rishi Kapoor opposite a fourteen-year-old girl, Dimple Kapadia, who instantly became the heartthrob of a generation. With teenagers playing teenagers, Raj Kapoor once again changed the trend in Indian cinema.

Kal Aaj Aur Kal (1972) is unique in many ways. It was the maiden starring vehicle for Raj Kapoor's eldest son, my brother Randhir Kapoor, who also made his debut as a director with this film. Moreover, three generations of the Kapoor family: Prithviraj Kapoor, Raj Kapoor and Randhir Kapoor, took their real-life relationship to the screen, acting as father, son and grandson respectively. In addition, Randhir's then fiancée (and now wife) in real life, Babita, enacted the part of his screen fiancée. Such a casting, which equates make-believe with real-life relationships, has no parallel in the annals of cinema or stage anywhere in the world. *Kal Aaj Aur Kal*, written by Virendra Sinha, puts the spotlight on generation gap and the conflict it breeds. It is a story of the classic clash between the past and the future, with the present hopelessly caught in the middle. Prithviraj Kapoor, the grandfather, represents the old aristocratic and orthodox attitude to life, while the grandson represents the modern, rebellious, non-conformist approach. Papa represents the middle generation, the one which is fearful of offending the parents and equally afraid of upsetting the children, lest they revolt and walk out. The film attempts to arrive at the ideal compromise to ensure happiness and harmony.

Dharam Karam (1976) was again directed by Randhir Kapoor. If *Awara* showed that circumstances and the environment make a man what he is, *Dharam Karam* explored the converse of the same concept, that it is a man's genes that determine what he is: like father, like son.

Raj Kapoor's next venture, this time both as producer and director, was *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* (1978]. This was a more complex film, which had as its theme the idea of inner beauty as opposed to physical beauty. To this Raj Kapoor also brought questions of sex, religion and social responsibility. It is one of Papa's most visually arresting films. He had always maintained that eroticism is a part of life; it is a part of beauty. But there was no nudity or vulgarity involved. The entire film was shot at his farm in Loni near Pune. He crafted the film with great sensitivity and love. The colours, the topography, the visuals in the film were spectacular, and music being so important to Papa, the film also had stunning music by Laxmikant–Pyarelal.

Prem Rog (1982) was a moving story of a young widow who suffers the indignity of rape by her brother-in-law. Combinations of tradition and modernity can be seen in a different form here. The film deals with widow remarriage. As with all traditions, Indian traditions too contain elements that are obsolete, counterproductive and harmful to modern, enlightened living. Without compromising on the story, *Prem Rog* stressed the importance of discriminating between the relevant and the obsolete, the positive and the negative elements in

tradition, to eliminate what is unhealthy and cultivate what is valuable.

Ram Teri Ganga Maili (1985) was the last film Papa completed. The idea for the film had been born several years earlier, after he heard of a remark from a holy man who had once said to Ramakrishna Paramahansa, 'Oh Rama, how polluted is your Ganga!' The river Ganga, sacred to the Hindus, is sparkling pure at its source in the Himalayas, but as it descends to the plains, it gets polluted. The film's heroine Ganga, too, is innocent and happy in her home in the mountains, but is cheated, raped and exploited when she comes to the city in search of her missing lover. The film symbolically sought to expose the corruption and deception that characterize modern Indian society. In the process, it generated much controversy for its uninhibited love scenes and the near nudity of the heroine. Critics accused Raj Kapoor of voyeurism, but he remained unperturbed as the audience clearly voted for the film, which generated unprecedented box-office revenues.

Raj Kapoor's films always evoked extreme reactions, but he was never affected by this. He knew that mass audiences had made him and he never deserted them. There will be endless debates about his exact contribution to the art of cinema, but few can deny that he was the greatest entertainer known to Indian films. He worked within the cinematic tradition he inherited, made modifications, and added new elements to it and thus created a popular art that was in tune with his temperament and view of life. He infused popular romantic sensibility into Indian cinema. Raj Kapoor was the last true movie mogul of Indian cinema. He was imperious and majestic, a dreamer of big dreams. His creations were clearly several times larger than R.K. Studios, which remains a living monument to one man's vision, energy and enterprise.

To commemorate 100 years of world cinema in 1990, the then Soviet Union was honouring some film personalities of the world. Among them were Ingrid Bergman, Jean Gabin, Charlie Chaplin, Marilyn Monroe and Raj Kapoor from India. To mark the occasion, Iskusstvo Publishing House in Moscow published the first edition of this book, originally titled *Raj Kapoor*. Over 100,000 copies were printed in the Russian language. The book was also translated into Chinese, Hindi and English.

The idea for the book was born shortly after Papa's death on 2 June 1988. A business colleague of mine, Suman Sehgal, told me that there was a requirement for a book on Raj Kapoor in the Soviet Union. I remember guiding him to contact Bunny Reuben, who besides being a dear friend and a colleague of my father was also the author of a biography, *Raj Kapoor: The Fabulous Showman*, which had been completed in Papa's lifetime and published shortly after his death. But the new proposal was not commercially viable for Bunny Reuben, and Suman Sehgal came back to me for further advice. I then advised him to approach Simi Garewal. She too was a very dear friend of Papa's, and a star colleague. She had made a documentary on Papa for Channel Four UK. Ironically, when the documentary, titled *Living Legend Raj Kapoor*, was telecast for the first time on Indian television, Papa was battling for his life at the All India Institute of Medical

Sciences, oscillating between what science could offer and what destiny had designed for him. There was a lot that I, Raj Kapoor's daughter, discovered about Papa through this wonderful documentary. I was certain Simi would do a great book. Unfortunately, the publisher in Moscow was unable to meet the terms demanded and Suman Sehgal was back again!

There was yet another book on Raj Kapoor, called *Raj Kapoor's Films: Harmony of Discourses*, by Malti Sahai and Wimal Dissanayake. It was actually a research at East West Centre in Hawaii, USA. Papa's work was used to illustrate how a true showman knows the pulse of the nation and how he uses the powerful medium of celluloid to communicate with the masses. It was a great tribute to Raj Kapoor, but the book was not a reflection of the person that Raj Kapoor was. I did not feel that this was the kind of book the Soviet publisher wanted. It was at this stage that I thought of a photographic book on Papa. I made a dummy of the concept and sent it to the publishing house in Moscow. The project was accepted and I received a telegram stating the date the delegation from Moscow would arrive to commence work on the book! I panicked and went to a publisher friend of mine, Aroon Purie, for guidance. To my astonishment, he said, 'You do it. Put your name on it.' It had not even occurred to me to attempt such a project. I thought it was a crazy suggestion and went on with my usual preoccupations, hoping to find a suitable person to author a record of Papa's life for posterity.

The delegation arrived in Delhi. I left with them for Bombay. My brothers at this time were busy completing my father's unfinished film *Henna*. My older brother had an assistant director called Khalid. He was also a writer. I remember requesting him to advise me on what the storyline should be. I had the concept but no clue at all what the text accompanying the pictures should be. Khalid promised to come and help me but did not keep his appointment. It seemed like a hopeless situation. I remember going to my father's room and breaking down. I wept. Here was this great honour that the Soviet Union was planning for my father, and I had kept the idea alive, but now I did not know what to do next. I was convinced I couldn't write the book myself. I might be the daughter of Raj Kapoor, but I did not know the great showman in the perspective required to produce an enduring record of his contribution to cinema. I prayed to my Guru Shri Shirdi Sai Baba to help me. In the holy book *Sai Satcharitra*, the author addresses Baba in the very first chapter: 'How can I write a book on you? You are God and I am a mere human being!' Sai Baba appears to him and says,' You write and I will write through you.' I implored to Sai Baba to help me likewise. I would in return offer the first copy of the book in his name at his shrine at Shirdi in Maharashtra. I did! Faith is believing in something you cannot see and the result of faith is to see what you believe in. It was as though God was communicating with me. Papa's video with his interview was on in his room, and an idea flashed in my mind to make Raj Kapoor write his own book! And then I became completely focused on how I wanted to create this book. I locked myself up with the project for four months, doing research, weaving a narrative with Papa's own words. At the end of four months the book was ready and, in 1991, one lakh

copies in Russian were published in Moscow. As a part of the contract of barter, R.K. Films and Studios was given ten thousand copies of the same book printed in English.

Eleven years later, in 2002, the second edition of the book had to be reprinted. I researched more and added more content to the same concept, with much greater insight into the different facets of Raj Kapoor's life and work. Penguin published this book, which is an autobiography of Raj Kapoor, fourteen years after he died. The book had also offered with it an interactive CD ROM in which Raj Kapoor speaks about his childhood, his beginnings, his work, his films, his heroines, his thoughts.

Now fifteen years later, HarperCollins is publishing the third edition again for R.K. Films and Studios. This edition is a tribute to a father by all the five children: Randhir Kapoor, Ritu Nanda, Rishi Kapoor, Rima Jain and Rajiv Kapoor. I have had the privilege to present this book too. It is a complete study of the great showman Raj Kapoor. It is both an autobiography and a biography of Raj Kapoor. The autobiography is a work of research done on Raj Kapoor from childhood to the end. All the text is in Raj Kapoor's own words. In all fairness to Raj Kapoor, his thoughts and words have neither been interpreted or rewritten but only compiled and edited. The biography is an attempt to record for posterity the lesser-known facets of his magnificent personality. Contributions for this have been made by his family, colleagues and friends. Every incident speaks of Raj Kapoor's mind. Time sweeps everything out of existence and leaves no traces behind. Raj Kapoor's children believe that this book will keep his spirit alive forever. Needless to say, the first copy of this book too would be offered to Sai Baba, at his shrine in Shirdi, Maharashtra. Without his grace this would not be possible to achieve. We are all very grateful.

In 1993, I had an opportunity to meet Boris Yeltsin, the then President of Russia, when he visited India. The Ministry of External Affairs told me later that when he was told of the request from Raj Kapoor's daughter to meet him, he directed his officials to ensure that the meeting was accommodated in his schedule. So there was little me, walking up the big aisles of the Rashtrapati Bhawan, where President Boris Yeltsin was being hosted by the President of India, being scrutinized by the sharp and suspicious eyes of hundreds of security guards. My purpose was a simple one. I wanted to gift the Russian President a commemorative copy of the original book on Papa that was published in Moscow. It was my way of officially expressing gratitude on behalf of the Raj Kapoor family. I have never forgotten the reverence with which Boris Yeltsin met me. I am nobody and Raj Kapoor is dead. But the President, a man whose every waking minute is taken up with official engagements of tremendous importance, had still made time for me and it was clear that even for him this was an emotional moment. His expressions spoke volumes of the admiration that he had for Raj Kapoor. He gave me a gift in return, and wrote in my copy of the book, 'I was in love with your father Raj Kapoor, and I remember him even today!'

Writing this, I am also reminded of the story Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, sister of

Jawaharlal Nehru, told me. It had been narrated to her by Indira Gandhi. Mrs Gandhi was accompanying her father, Prime Minister Nehru, on an official visit to the Soviet Union. Nikolai Bulganin was the Soviet President then. At the official banquet for the visiting Indian prime minister, when it was President Bulganin's turn to speak, he got up and with his colleagues sang '*Awara hoon*', the title song of Raj Kapoor's film *Awara*.

In 1994, my mother, while she was in St. Petersburg, visited the famous Peterhof Palace. The attendants there asked her if she was an Indian and the next question was whether she knew Raj Kapoor. They were in total disbelief at the same time thrilled to meet his wife and shocked to learn that Raj Kapoor was dead. In 1996, Randhir Kapoor and I were officially sent as state guests by the Government of India to China. India was opening up relations with China, and part of the cultural exchange was a retrospective of Raj Kapoor's films. The experience that we two children had in China was unreal. Raj Kapoor had never visited China; he knew that he was famous there, as he had been told that his films reached China via the USSR. He wanted to be remembered in China as he was on screen, in *Awara* and *Shree 420*. Randhir and I shined in his glory. We even broke down once when for the sixth time in one day it happened that on spotting us Indians, the Chinese broke into that immortal song '*Awara hoon*'. They didn't know who we were, they were all honouring Raj Kapoor, and India. It is said that *Awara* was also Mao's favourite film.

This is the legacy of Raj Kapoor. He didn't have just uncanny comic timing, he had historic timing too, which would bring him, in socialist and communist countries, a following bigger than Jawaharlal Nehru. He worked within the cinematic tradition he inherited, modified it, added new elements to it and thus produced a distinctive seductively romantic and immensely popular legacy. He was India's greatest cultural ambassador. His films were an ideology, if one can call that of emotionalism and entertainment. He sugared his social concerns with sauciness, music, romanticism and melodrama. His films always carried a message and he was known to be with the pulse of the nation.

I am grateful for the encouragement and support that I have received from my immediate family, particularly from Rajan, my husband, my children and the extended family of Raj Kapoor. For the material in this book, and for my research, I have drawn upon Raj Kapoor's journals, his interviews, and my conversations with critics and Raj Kapoor's associates, friends and family.

Finally, we, the children of Raj Kapoor, would like to dedicate this book to our mother, who, like her children, believes that Raj Kapoor is a man who will not die.

Childhood

'Among my earliest impressions of childhood is one of great intimacy with my parents. It was only natural, considering that my father was just eighteen when I was born, and my mother sixteen. The difference in age between us was so little that they could never quite overawe me.'—Raj Kapoor

Raj Kapoor with his parents Ramsarni, Prithviraj Kapoor and his only sister Umi (1933)

Raj Kapoor as a child

The environment I grew up in was entirely one of theatre and films. We came to Bombay in 1927. That was the era of silent films. My father joined the J. Grant Anderson Theatre, where Ardeshir Irani made the first Indian talkie, *Alam Ara*, and father was in it. I myself was barely five when I first acted in a play, called *The Toy Cart*, for which I got my first award. It was then that the whole thing just occurred to me, and I could not do anything except belong to the world of show business.

I was very fair, with blue eyes. My father's actresses used to cuddle me whenever I visited the stage, and I used to feel very excited. But even that early I had learnt the art of concealing emotions. I was extremely precocious. And I was a worshipper of nudity. I think it all started because of my intimacy with my mother who was young, beautiful, and had the sharp features of a Pathan woman. We often bathed together, and seeing her in the nude must have left a deep erotic impression on my mind. There is an excellent Urdu phrase, *muqaddas uriyan* (sacred nudity), which describes this perfectly. In my films, bathing scenes recur often. Women in general occupy most of my early memories, and they appear in my films like ghosts that refuse to be buried.

We had once gone to Lyallpur in western Punjab, now in Pakistan, which is my father's birthplace. My great-grandfather was the tehsildar there, and the villagers held the family in great respect. An earthen oven was always kept lit in the centre of the village, and women roasted chana on the fire.

I remember having gone to buy chana wearing a shirt and nothing under it. The woman at the oven had an odd smile on her face as she said, 'You don't have to pay for the chana, just raise your shirt and make a bowl out of it.' I did, and stood like that, and she laughed her head off looking at me. I was totally innocent. Years later when this memory came back to me and I understood the trick she must have been up to, it disturbed me a great deal. For some time in my life, chana itself became almost a sex object. It might have come back into my cinema at a subconscious level. There's a scene in Bobby when the boy flashes a mirror into Bobby's face while she's sitting in the library. The girl comes out, first in rage, then in playfulness. The boy says, 'Let's have tea.' Bobby says, 'No, let's have chana.'

Raj Kapoor's parents, Prithviraj and Ramsarni Kapoor (1954)

I was a precocious child. I was always aware of my surroundings. In Lyallpur, my great-grandfather, the tehsildar, used to go plucking cotton and we kids would go with him because it was fun. One day, probably because of the heat, I must have wandered away to rest in the shade of a tree and gone off to sleep. At sunset, they missed me. My grandmother started howling and shouting. All of a sudden, Ramu, the sweeper, an untouchable, brought me home and said, 'Forgive me that I touched him. I've carried him here.'

He apologized with folded hands. I was not permitted to come into the house. My mother was asked to bathe me first, because an untouchable had touched me. I didn't know the implications of all this then, but I knew that what was being done was wrong. We lived in Calcutta for eight years, returning to Bombay when I was fourteen. We lived on Hazra Road near Kalighat. My father went to work every day on a bicycle: New Theatres was not very far away. I studied in St. Xavier's School. In my neighbourhood, everybody used to call me 'Prithvi-r chhele, Prithvi-r chhele'. I was the pampered brat. Neighbourhood weddings, Durga puja pandals, local musical soirees, I was a permanent fixture everywhere

One-year-old Raj (1925); Raj Kapoor's great-grandfather Lala Keshavmal Kapoor (1880); Raj Kapoor's grandfather Bishes Kapoor (1910)

Everybody in our family is fond of food. That is the reason why the young and the old are all obese. As a child, I too was very fat. My mother, citing the example of my father, would always nag me to exercise. While sending me to school, she would pack an omelette and chapatti for me. But my taste buds were always looking for new flavours. There were three or four eating places which I used to visit regularly. My allowance was only two annas a day, which was not enough to meet this expense. So I would stop my credit at one shop and open an account at another. Once the credit got beyond my means, I would sell a book or two … I would return home from school and give back the packed meal to my mother, saying that I didn't eat it because I was on a diet. Her concern and love would make her feed me even more!

In school I was very fond of acting. My father was a great actor, so I thought that it was my privilege and my prerogative to become a great actor as well. It so happened that our school staged a passion play. The most paramount thing in my mind was that every child who worked in that passion play was given three coupons to eat sandwiches, samosas and coffee and ice cream—all sorts of beautiful things to eat. I got a costume like a cassock that Fathers wore that was a bit too long for my short size.

Anyway, we were supposed to go once or twice behind Christ, shouting hosanna … hosanna … hosanna. I did that once, I did it twice, and being an exuberant actor, I went in for the third entry which was not supposed to be there. When I entered the stage, my foot got caught in the cassock I was wearing, and I fell down right in front of a very serious Christ, and people laughed and Christ also laughed. I was happy that I had made Christ laugh. When the curtain came down, the drama master caught me by the neck. He hit me, and said, 'You are an actor? Your father is an actor? I think you are a donkey! You get out and don't come back again!' My coupons were taken away and I didn't get any sandwiches, I didn't get any ice cream, I didn't get any cake and I didn't get any samosas!

Left: Raj Kapoor with (from left) his sister Umi, brother Shammi and mother Ramsarni (1936)

My childhood memories are pitted with the indelible scars of experience. I was a fatty. Every sort of practical joke was (played on me). Apart from some vivid patches of happiness (my childhood years) were quite miserable. These patches of happiness were the occasions when I fell in love, but more of that later. To return to the miserable moments. I soon picked up the most natural defence mechanism—the one used by all the great jokers of the world. I learnt that the more one resisted being a target, the more one suffered. So, instead, I put on the mask of a joker by reacting as though I thoroughly enjoyed being made the butt of practical jokes. Indeed, I even took this a step further by inventing jokes on myself, which would make my colleagues laugh. You see, I was seeking that which every school boy seeks—the love, affection and esteem of others. I remember Principal Soares. He was also the Latin teacher and Latin was the second language in those days. In the examinations, when the Latin paper came up, I wrote, 'Latin is a dead language, why dig up the buried?' I got one mark out of a hundred and that too complimentary. Principal Soares said, 'Unfortunately, boy, I can't say anything as far as your academic education is concerned. You are otherwise brilliant, and you have the world before you!'

I wanted to be liked. I had an unlimited capacity to love and to be loved and it was not long before I fell in love once, twice, thrice and so forth. All these experiences began crystallizing into a rough-and-ready philosophy of life in my formative years. In (school) dramas and plays, I began to put into practice my theory of being liked and also being in the spotlight. I found that the audience at those school dramas tended to grow restive

during long, dreary passages. So, right in the middle of them, I would casually do something funny and totally unrelated to the proceedings and get involuntary giggles from the frontbenchers. I would follow that up with another little funny thing, and the giggles would become laughter and spread from the frontbenchers right through the house to the backbenchers. Thus, I learned the rudimentary lessons in 'scene-stealing'. I began adding to my storehouse of experiences, which I was to carry forward to the time when, many years later, I moved inevitably into films.

In *Mera Naam Joker*, the child's crush on his beautiful teacher, played by Simi Garewal, is no fantasy of the scriptwriter. I was a great favourite of women teachers in every school that I attended. My first school was the New Era Boys' School on Hughes Road, Bombay, where the teachers would queue up to kiss me! I was in the prep class then, and I used to get irritated with them and ask them, 'Why do you kiss me? Are you my mother?' Undaunted, they would kiss me more! I was very fond of one of these teachers. Once, we had gone out on a picnic with this teacher when we saw a large flock of birds winging into the evening sky. It came back years later in a sequence in *Mera Naam Joker* with the song '*Titar ke do aage titar*…' I got so attached to this teacher at age six that when my father took up a job with New Theatres and we had to shift to Calcutta, I dug my heels in, telling my parents that I would rather stay at the school hostel than pack up and leave. In my last few days in Bombay, I used to bring her flowers. It was a tearful parting.

White is my favourite colour and it is deeply rooted in my mind and in my heart. I remember to this day how the colour white came to be imprinted in my memory. We were living in Calcutta. One morning, as I was getting ready to go to school, I heard my mother tell the cook to buy chicken as some friends of my father were expected for lunch. Chicken! My mouth began to water. I decided to play truant that afternoon and return home for lunch. Father and his guests were already seated at the table when I entered the dining room. 'There is no school today?' Papaji asked me sternly. 'No,' I mumbled, avoiding his eye, 'it is a half day.' Among the guests was a young woman. She was dressed in white. I looked at her, and I could not look away. She seemed to me to be the most beautiful woman in the world. The guests stayed all afternoon and I too hung around the house. I had fallen in love with her of course. Then it was time for them to go. They were saying farewell. I went into the garden in front of the house. I plucked some creamy white tuberoses. And I was still plucking them when the woman in white came down the steps. Stammering and blushing, I gave her the fragrant gift. She took the flowers from me, murmuring her pleasure. She walked through the garden and onto the road. Turn around, I pleaded in my heart. Just this once! Please look back! But she did not turn. She was gone forever and I could not forget her. Ever since it has been an endless search for the ideal which always recedes, leaving only the white flowers as visible evidence of the search.

Family

'Tomorrow I may not be there, but I will live through my children and my heritage.'—Raj Kapoor

From left back row: Raj Kapoor, Krishna Kapoor, Neila Kapoor, Shammi Kapoor, Jennifer Kapoor with daughter Sanjana, Shashi Kapoor Middle row: Prithviraj Kapoor and Ramsarni Kapoor From left front row: Rishi, Kanchan, Rajiv, Aditya, Karan, Randhir and Kunal Kapoor

Raj Kapoor with wife Krishna (1963)

Raj Kapoor on Prithviraj Kapoor

My father, I remember, was very fond of swimming, and one day, when we were living in Calcutta, he took me along to a lake where he frequently swam. He carried me into the

water in his arms and once we were in chest-deep, he let go of me. Standing on the banks, my mother began to give Papaji a good yelling: 'You'll kill my son like this!' But Papaji remained cool and unruffled and watched me fling my arms about desperately. It was not long before I got the hang of it and learnt how to swim. This was Papaji's attitude. He maintained this with all his children, and it is this attitude that I have adopted as well. Papaji greatly enjoyed his role of a friendly father. When I was very young, he had shown me, man to man, the Andy Hardy film series produced by MGM in which Mickey Rooney and Lewis Stone played father and son, treating each other as equals. Once he went to Sumatra and Bali with some delegation and returned with a nude painting as a present for me, which you will still find in my cottage, with a note that read, 'Sorry, I could not bring you a live one…'

Like a lamb following Mary, I followed my father. He came to Bombay in 1927 and began life as an unpaid extra, to achieve stardom within a few years. He starred in *Alam Ara*, India's first talkie film. It was my father who taught me that the greatest artist is one who has the ability to treat any work as if it is a part of his self, who can attract the love of others through his qualities of politeness and softness. If you can become an artist loved by all, there cannot be a greater artist than you. I started under his shadow, to learn, to educate myself. It was he who introduced me to drama and the stage. And it was from the stage that I took to the screen.

Prithviraj Kapoor, father

I have forty-odd years of memories; I could talk of Raju for as many years perhaps and still not exhaust my stock! When my wife (Ramsarni Kapoor) was expecting our first child, I had predicted that it would be a boy. I had written the name 'Ranbir Raj', chosen by me for the boy, on a slip of paper and put it under Ramsarni's pillow. Raj was a lovely child with blue eyes and ruddy cheeks. The eyes were probably inherited from his great-grandfather. His cheeks were so markedly ruddy, Ramsarni would rub them with a wet cloth on the assumption that it was dust settled on the child's face! Years later, all three of us were in Moscow. Raju was a juror at the film festival. I was shooting for *Pardesi* and my wife was with me. Russian girls at the festival hall were mobbing Raj and when I extricated him at my wife's bidding and brought him to her, she again wiped his cheeks. This time the colour did come off—it was all lipstick!

From left back row: Father Prithviraj Kapoor, brother Shammi Kapoor, sister Umi Sial, Raj Kapoor;
Middle row: Mother Ramsarni, wife Krishna,
Front row: Brother Shashi Kapoor

At Peshawar, where Raj was born, and places like Samundari, where he would go on family visits, the child was popular with everyone at home and outside. He was what is the expression?—'The apple of everyone's eye'. Even the tradesmen enjoyed making him sing and dance. They would not take money for some little thing he wanted from their shop. Raj's musical talent is not so well known. When he was quite young, he gave what could be described as his first major public performance, singing two songs from the film *Hamari Baat* at a variety show at the hill station of Murree on the Frontier. This went down well and Raj was subsequently much in demand. His songs in the play *Deewar* were recorded but the discs probably never reached the market.

Raj Kapoor with Prithviraj Kapoor

When Raj was about seven, he came to the studio where I was shooting one evening, accompanied by a servant, and said that Bindu, his brother, was ill. He would not say a word more. But since his mother had sent him in a taxi which was normally a luxury for us those days, I immediately sensed something serious had happened. Four-year-old Bindu (Ravinder) had gone to play in a neighbour's garden in the suburb of Khar where we lived. His mother called him for his bath. He came up, choked and died in her arms. The doctor surmised it was a case of snakebite, but the theory gained ground that the child had accidentally swallowed one of the sweetened pills the neighbour used for killing rats. Tragedy again struck the family, within a fortnight. Another child, Devender, younger to Bindu, took ill with high fever and died. I have never forgotten the faces of those children or of Raj as he came to the studio that day.

Raj was a good student, tops in English and very good in acting and directing school plays and winning prizes in elocution competitions. But he failed to matriculate. What was probably his undoing was his weakness in arithmetic and Latin! A year before Raj should have matriculated, I called him for a 'man-to-man' chat, complimenting him for his attainments in extracurricular activities but warning him that he should make up for his weakness in certain classroom subjects. My father had recently asked me to meet the principal of the school and 'put in a word' on behalf of (my younger brother) Vishi who was not expected to get his form for the matriculation examination. But I had no intention of similarly interceding on behalf of my own son, so I told him to promise me that he would get his form himself and never ask me to get it for him. Raj promised. Some days later, my wife came to me saying that it was doubtful Raj would be allowed to sit for his matriculation and that I should meet the principal. I smiled, and told her, of course I would do it. Only, let Raj come and ask me himself. He never did.

Raj was like that. I remember, as a reigning star those days I could have provided my sons with many luxuries. I never did. Raj took a tram to school, like the other boys. One rainy morning, when my wife asked permission to send Raj to school in the family car, I told her, 'You know, everyone has some priceless experiences. On a rainy day like this, there is a great thrill in walking the streets … it is fun. But today, of course, it is raining very hard and Raju is getting late, so

let him take the car.' Raj was within hearing distance. He said to me, 'No, sir, I will take the tram.' As we stood watching the boy off from the balcony, I said to my wife, 'Don't worry about the car. Here is a boy who has just booked himself cars much fancier than any his father has or will ever have.'

Raj Kapoor with mother Ramsarni

After the fiasco of the matriculation examinations, Raj came to me for a 'man-to-man' chat, this time on his own initiative. 'I can, of course, continue my studies,' he said, 'but all I'll learn is how to wear clothes in style and perhaps get a degree after which I will again come to you asking you to get me a job.' Instead of which he wanted to start working right away—in films. I smiled, remembering the hue and cry in my own family when I took to films. I gave my son some 300 rupees and told him to visit all the family units at such places as Lahore, Sheikhpura, Samundari and Dehradun. 'When you return, if you still want to join films, I will help you to get started.' All our relatives welcomed Raj with great affection. He was always fond of eating. They plied him with all sorts of delicacies as a result of which he got dysentery. Raju survived this as well as the opposition put up against a film career. He came back and told me he hadn't changed his mind. So, I spoke to Chandulal Shah and got a job for Raj at Ranjit Studios. I laid down two conditions. One, that he should not be paid any salary, and the other was that he should be treated like any other worker at the studio and not as Prithviraj's son. At home, I briefed my son that his monthly pocket

allowance would now be increased from rupees fifteen to rupees thirty. 'To get ready for your working life,' I told him, 'you will please ask your mother to stitch as many white pants and shirts as you need. Go in the morning wearing white and return in the evening with your clothes full of the red dust of the studio.' Raj's daily lunch would not be sent to him at the studio. The young man carried it by himself.

Or he could eat at any hotel near the studio, paying for it from his own pocket money. At Ranjit, Raj worked as an assistant to director Kidar Sharma, who later was to give him his first break as a leading man in *Neel Kamal*. Raj had already got a brief scene in a Kidar Sharma film called *Gauri* that I had done. But this was not his very first appearance. Earlier, when I was working in Calcutta, the noted film-maker Debaki Bose had used Raj, then just a boy, for a small appearance in *After the Earthquake*. Subsequently, Gul Hamid, the actor–director, took Raj away from me for some shooting but I have lost track of what he did. I didn't want to make a child star of Raj. I did not want any of my sons to go through what Jackie Coogan did, early glory followed by difficulties in later life. After about a year at Ranjit, Raj joined Bombay Talkies, following an advertisement from the studio for applicants in both its acting and production departments. Raj was a salaried employee here. Raj set to work with his usual enthusiasm. But after a period of work at the studio, he was disappointed at not being able to get a starring role. All that came his way were one or two brief appearances in films. He asked my permission to join Prithvi Theatres. It was granted. Raj worked as a general assistant in all departments. I fixed his salary at Rs 201 a month, a token rupee more than his salary at Bombay Talkies by way of encouragement. At the theatre, Raj's younger brother Shammi got an acting break earlier than Raj, who got his with *Deewar*. All the pent-up force of years was released with his performance on the opening day of *Deewar*. Raj proved a revelation to all.

Raj Kapoor with Shammi and Shashi Kapoor

Raj Kapoor would touch his parents' feet reverently. This was one thing he never missed anywhere, any time. He would often remember his father as having said, 'Today people remark that Raj Kapoor is the son of Prithviraj Kapoor, but a time will come when people will say, there goes Prithviraj Kapoor, the father of Raj Kapoor. That will be the biggest day in my life.'

Raj Kapoor on his brothers

I had two younger brothers. One was named Ravinder and the other Devender. Ravinder, whom everyone called Bindi, was far more stable, serious-minded and sensible than I. One day, Papaji was away at the studios when Bindi suddenly took ill. He had swallowed rat poison by mistake. He died. Then Devender died too within the span of a week—he had pneumonia. I was all alone. Then Shammi, my sister Umi and Shashi were born. Ever since, our relationship has been very close.

Shammi is very dear to me. But all those years, when he was a top star, I never had a subject for him. It was only when I needed that majestic, regal-looking thakur in my film *Prem Rog* that I saw him as the ideal actor for the role and took him. Shammi was of no use to me as the 'Yahoo' star. But in *Prem Rog*, the screen lights up every time he makes an

appearance.

Umi with Raj, Shammi and Shashi Kapoor

Shammi Kapoor, brother

I am seven years younger than Raj-ji. I remember in his room there were a couple of cupboards which were locked all the time. Being very sneaky, I hacked into his cupboard one day and I found cuttings from newspapers, foreign magazines, fashion magazines for ladies, and pictures of hairstyles and different dresses and designs, and storybooks and scenarios and scripts. He must have been sixteen or seventeen at that time. That is when he was an assistant so this (passion for film-making) was in him from the very beginning. No one knew that he was preparing himself basically to be what he was destined to be, a film-maker. He was obsessed with films, he talked films, he smoked films, he drank films, he ate films, he slept films, he slept with them all the time—he even dreamt films. I remember, I was three or four years old, we were in Calcutta, and it being a Sunday, we were allowed to see a movie. Raj-ji had volunteered to escort me to the movie. Being a senior he had the option to select the movie. I remember he had selected *Gulliver's Travels*. Mother gave us a rupee, which was a lot of money, enough to take care of the transport, tickets and the eats. There was a big rush. Raj-ji asked Dwarka, our servant, who was also with us, and me to wait outside. We kept on waiting. Eventually, after two hours Raj-ji came and said there were no tickets available and we returned home. When Mother wondered how it could have taken him two hours to realize there were no tickets, he confessed that the four-anna tickets had been sold out, so he bought a twelve-anna ticket and saw the movie alone! I have never forgotten this.

Neila Kapoor, Shammi Kapoor's wife

Raj-ji was a father figure for me. He was the person responsible for me to be in

the Kapoor family. For any family functions or any occasions, he was always there for us. It was always an honour for us to prepare suckling pig for him! Then he would ask, 'Where is my "putting"?' That was his favourite caramel custard. It was a treat to listen to him when he would talk about his films or what he was making. Especially when he used to sing and talk about his music was an experience, most enchanting. We truly miss him.

Raj Kapoor with Shashi, Prithviraj and Shammi Kapoor

Umi Sial with Shammi, Raj, Shashi and Prithviraj Kapoor

Umi Sial, sister

Years after our parents died, we would sit below their framed photographs hung above Raj-ji's mattress—he never slept on a bed!—and talk. His face would sadden and his glorious blue eyes cloud with memories and then he would heave a sigh, shake his head and say, 'But I have yet much more to learn and more to create. I still have so much work to do.' Just as I wondered at his sincere humility, he would suddenly yell, 'But without me where would you all be! Aham Brahmaasmi

(I am the Lord)!' Surely, I could not let this statement pass and it became a healthy ground for much argument. Soon he would recant with, 'Silence, dear beloved, I am only a matric fail! I could not fathom the subject Latin, which I am yet to learn. I have a long way to go.' I still remember how annoying it was when Raj-ji would yell out to me to come and give him a kiss and when I went close, out would come his tongue and slurp all over my face, and he would roar with laughter! When I would shout out to my mother and chase him off, he would run away … quite a scene of brotherly love!

With Umi

Anu Kheta, Umi Sial's daughter

My earliest recollection of Raj Uncle is of Diwali in Chembur. We were all getting ready to go down for the party and uncle came up and asked all the kids to stand in a queue and gave every kid some money. I put my hand out again and he gave me more money, his eyes twinkling, knowing very well that he had already given me my share. I remember during the shooting of his film *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*, he called and invited Rima and me to the studios for lunch. We sat on a long table with his colleagues, his cameraman, spot boys and other workers. It was such a pleasure to hear one of the artist sitting next to me say, 'What a great man Raj-ji is! He is sitting and eating with everybody. There is no differentiation in his attitude towards his workers and his artists, everyone is sitting together and

eating the same food.

A few years ago, I was visiting Orlando in USA. We were walking in a mall. A young boy was trying to sell me something that I was not interested in. Seeing me in an Indian outfit, he asked me which country I came from. When I told him that I was an Indian, he started singing the song from *Shree 420*, '*Mera joota hai Japani*'. I was amazed. I feel so proud that he is my uncle.

Preeti, Umi Sial's daughter

In 1985, I was in college, studying in Bombay and staying with Raj Uncle in his house. At that time, they had found that there was some problem with his lungs and he was undergoing various investigations. Uncle used to sometimes call me in the evening and ask me to explain his reports to him. He would talk to me on various topics. I remember once he was talking of people who we think are good and holy but turn out to be bad and sometimes when we think they are not good or they are supposed to be the evil, people turn out good. He started developing the story of the film he made later called *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*. He started dictating notes to me of the broad storyline of the film. I used to write his various thoughts for the film in a notebook he gave me. From there he eventually weaved the screenplay of the film. At the end of the film, he wanted to kill Ganga. It was Krishna aunty (his wife) who reacted that you cannot kill Ganga. He kept her alive. I had the privilege of seeing how he developed a film from a simple thought. Rima and I would go partying. Sometimes we would return very late. Before entering the gate of the house, we would stop and shut the car and quietly roll the car so he would not hear, as his room was right at the entrance. We used to take out our shoes and crawl quietly across his room but he had a sixth sense which was unbelievable. He used to know that we had come! He would check with us about the evening and then ask us to go to bed. He used to have chickens which laid eggs daily. These eggs used to go to him in a basket. He was very possessive about these. They were not for family consumption but only for him. But when my mother was there, living with him, he would send her two eggs daily. That was his expression of love for his sister!'

Jatin Sial: Umi Sial's son

Once during my usual summer vacation stay with my uncle at his residence in Chembur, I remember I was around twenty years old at that time, when the only hard work was to party all night. On one such occasion, when I was all set to go out one evening along with my cousin Chimpu, Raj Uncle suddenly walked in. Chimpu quickly slipped away from behind and I was stranded alone in front of two beautifully blue but powerful, penetrating eyes. Seeing me all dressed up, raising one famous eyebrow, he casually asked, '*Kahan ja rahen ho*? (Where are you going?)' Gathering all my guts and confidence, I replied casually, 'Oh! I am just going to my friend's house for a drink!' Without moving his all-knowing eyes, he smiled and said, '*Bete, kamao, piyo aur pilao* (Son, earn, drink and entertain

others).' and walked away. The significance and importance of those three simple words escaped me that night, but over a period of years, they have sunk in so deeply that they have contributed in making me whatever I am today. Raj Kapoor was not only a genius in the art of film-making, but was also a seer who saw and understood life in a manner very few did or do.

Shashi Kapoor, brother

Jennifer and I did not have money to fly from Singapore to Bombay to get married in the presence of my parents. I wrote to Raj-ji, and he immediately sent me two air tickets. This was how I kept my promise to my mother. Raj Kapoor was like a father to me.

Fourteen years older than I am, he often called me his eldest son. My earliest recollections are of him slogging it out at Prithvi Theatres. He was in charge of the entire production. He would reach the theatre by six in the morning and remain there until late at night. The kind of energy he had made people wonder if Raj-ji had an extra generator in him. My father admired the capabilities of his eldest son, since he handled virtually everything from production to design, from music to lighting. When Raj-ji started R.K. Studios in 1946 after his marriage, I was roped in as a part of his first venture, *Aag*. It was wonderful to work with him. There was one thing I did not quite fancy, though, and that was shooting at night. But oh, Raj-ji knew how to extract work from me! He would tempt me with an extra omelette or a soft drink.

As a child, I had picked up foul language and would often use it while talking to my elders. One day Raj-ji heard me use it with my mother, and promptly slapped me. I was taken aback. My brother had always lavished affection on me. Moreover, I had never been hit by either of my parents. I shut myself up in a room and howled. Raj-ji tried to console me, but when I wouldn't stop crying, he also burst into tears!

The three brothers, Raj, Shammi and Shashi Kapoor

When Raj-ji launched *Awara*, I got another opportunity to work with him. I played the young vagabond. One day I went up to him and asked him why he wasn't paying me. He was taken aback. The very next morning, he bought me a Bell and Howell 16mm movie camera and said, 'Look, you can make use of as much raw stock as possible, but you've got to make a film.' This was how he became my guru in the film line.

I consider his dream sequence in *Awara* by far the best sequence he has ever produced. When I once challenged him to produce a dream sequence that could beat *Awara*'s, he promptly replied, 'I would give you a better sequence if I had Nargis, Shankar, Jaikishen, Shailendra and Mukesh with me.' I had no answer. His magnificent personality left you speechless. This is the greatness of Raj Kapoor.

Shashi Kapoor with Raj Kapoor

I remember when I had to do a song sequence for the first time, I got very nervous. I went to Raj-ji and he said, 'Why should you be nervous? Take it easy, do it naturally. Learn the words, move your lips, take a breath when necessary. But don't overdo it. It is better to underplay a role and look more natural. You are a Kapoor and you can do it.' His advice worked like magic.

My favourites among his own acting roles are *Aag*, *Barsaat* and the after-marriage part in *Sangam*. I think he was tops in the comedy role of *Dastan*. He was a fantastic showman. And he whole-heartedly believed in everything he did. The first thing that struck you about Raj Kapoor was his effervescence. No matter how passive you were, he elevated you mentally. There was never a dull moment with him. With people who were shy, he had the knack of putting them at ease, without seeming to do so. He was also very discreet about other people's problems, in films or outside. He never gave advice unless asked to. As a film-maker, he was, of course, a superb showman. There was a certain totality of effect in his productions, the result of various elements like publicity and production, and I don't think people were ever disappointed with him.

Kunal Kapoor, Shashi Kapoor's son

Raj Uncle had built Floor No 1, R.K. Studios—but it yet had no roof, so they used to shoot at night. He was shooting *Awara*, and was planning the dream song sequence. He wanted 'clouds' but was not sure how to achieve the visual effect he desired. A fire broke out in the studio and everyone panicked. Some got water in buckets to put the fire out. Raj Uncle picked up a fire extinguisher, pointed it at the fire and engaged the extinguisher. What emerged was a thick blanket of white 'smoke'. Raj Uncle completely forgot all about the fire and started playing with the extinguisher. End result: the song, as we know it today with the desired 'clouds'! His obsession was his films, he thought, dreamt, ate and slept his cinema. Even when a fire threatened his own studio, he was thinking of his film, getting distracted by what he had discovered and ignoring the fire. Such was his obsession.

Raj Kapoor on his wife, Krishna

To be very honest with you, I don't think that I have been a very good family man. And if I have a family, the greatest credit and virtue is Mrs Raj Kapoor's. It is she who has tolerated me the last thirty-three years and it is she who has gone through all along with me in whatever I have been able to do in my career, and stood by me and reared this beautiful family.

I have three sons. Two of them are on their own now; they are actors and directors, they are stars. The youngest is being groomed. He is being taught the way I learnt, right from scratch, he also sweeps the floors, picks up all the lights, assists, goes to the laboratories, sits up in the editing room and edits, learning the way this craft should be learnt. I have two daughters. One is a happily married lady today with two children. My other daughter, very soon she too will be on her way to a beautiful home and husband. And I think then Krishna and myself, we will have a lot to reminisce in the last lap of life … what we lived through and how we are still together. All credit to Krishna Kapoor. Though sometimes we don't get along very well—we have never been on beautiful terms ever for that matter—we have always been together. And the credit is hers and not mine. I can assure you that she is a very kind and tolerant woman. And she has been a great daughter-in-law to my parents, cared for and looked after them. This is the truth about the family of Raj Kapoor.

Raj Kapoor with Krishna and their three sons Rishi, Rajiv and Randhir Kapoor

The fourth daughter of Rai Saheb Kartar Nath Malhotra, who was Inspector General of Police of Rewa state, Krishna was barely sixteen when she married Raj Kapoor. She is the first cousin of

I was planning to make *Aag* and had gone over to my co-star Prem Nath's house on the pretext of discussing his role with me, but actually to see his sister Krishna, who had been recommended to me for marriage by the elders in my family. As I entered the house, I could hear a sitar. I was automatically drawn towards the room from where the sound emanated. As I reached the door, I stood spellbound.

Krishna Kapoor, wife

We were kids when we got married. I was sixteen and he was twenty-one! I was from a small town called Reva in the state of Madhya Pradesh. He was my cousin's son. My father's sister's grandson! He had come to Reva to take permission from my father to allow my brother Prem Nath to act in films. It was love at first sight. I was preparing for my practical exams in music. I got to play the sitar. He heard the sound of sitar being played in the room and he barged in and asked me if he could give accompaniment to my music practice on the tabla. I still remember, after the practice was over, he left his visiting card for me on the table! That was his way of introducing himself. The card read, 'Production in charge Prithvi Theatres'. I was very impressed by him.

After three days, he returned to Bombay. Soon thereafter, out of the blue, I received a marriage proposal from the Kapoor family. In two months' time, on 12 May 1946, we got married.

Raj Kapoor's first visiting card

PROGRAMME.

BOMBAY

1. Hath Bharna: Sunday 5th May' 1946
2. Barat Leaves Bombay for Rewa by Calcutta Mail Sat. 11th May' 1946 8-30 P. M.
3. Barat Reaches Satna: (Rly. Station for Rewa) Sunday 12th May' 46 7 P. M.

REWA

4. Marriage Procession: Sunday 12th May' 46 Night
5. Doli & Vidai: Tuesday 14th May' 46

Diwan & Mrs. Bashesher Nath Kapoor

present their compliments and request the pleasure of

_____'s company

at the happy and auspicious occasion of the marriage of their grand son

Sjt. RANBIR RAJ KAPOOR

Son of

Sjt. Prithvi Raj Kapoor

TO

KUMARI KRISHNA

Daughter of

Rai Sahib Kartar Nath Mehra

Inspector General of Police

REWA

as per programme.

R. S. V. P.

Printed Raj Kapoor,

M.G.A., College Road,

MATUNGA,

BOMBAY.

Tele "[illegible]"

Phone [illegible]

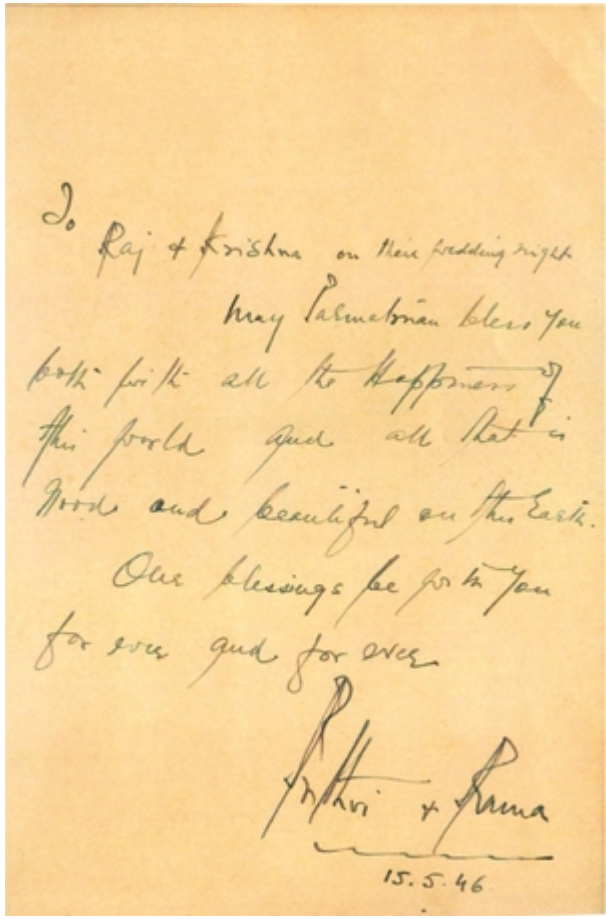
Raj Kapoor's wedding card

On my wedding night, my father-in-law gifted to us a book by Rabindranath Tagore titled *Gitanjali*. Inscribed on the first page was a message for us, 'To Raj and Krishna on their wedding night. May Parmathama bless you both with all the happiness of this world and all that is good and beautiful on this earth. Our blessings be with you forever and forever!'

At a tender age of sixteen, I least realized what it was to get married to a genius and a showman like Raj Kapoor.

Soon after our marriage, he signed his first film titled *Neel Kamal*, with director Kidar Sharma. There was turmoil in our marriage but, at the end of the

day, we both realized that we could neither live with each other nor without each other. Today, I realize that a celebrity's life is like an open book. I regret the days when we didn't talk with each other. I suppose that is what is called maturity!


To
Raj & Krishna on their wedding night
May Paramatman bless you
both with all the happiness of
this world and all that is
good and beautiful on this Earth.
Our blessings are with you
for ever and for ever
Prithvi & Rama
15.5.46

Gift from Prithviraj Kapoor to Raj Kapoor and Krishna Kapoor on their wedding night

Although he always treated me like a queen, I was very jealous when his fans and girls chased him. All this was too much for me to handle then. And today, I am only known by his name. He is my identity. I am very proud of this. He was fast in everything. He achieved success in life very early and also went away very early at the age of sixty-three!

Raj Kapoor on his wife, Krishna

Krishna is a perfectionist in all fronts. Those who have known this 'woman in white' will agree that she is a loyal wife, friend and companion and also an ideal mother and grandmother. Indeed, she is blessed with all the good qualities. She is an excellent person with a fantastic sense of humour and a very warm hostess. The most striking aspect of her personality is that she combines traditional values with modernity in its true sense. Modernity for her is not merely a fashion but a way of life. Her belief in modernity is as strong as her faith in traditional values. The two things combine so naturally in her personality that there seems to be no conflict in them. She is a great hostess. She would attend to each and every guest irrespective of his social or financial status.

Raj Kapoor has been famous for his elaborate parties and his wife has been the pivotal force behind these parties. She would conduct a party with the effortless efficiency of a great composer conducting a symphony orchestra. Spreading happiness all around her is her prime concern and she is always at peace with herself. She has compassion for the poor and the deprived. She gives away a lot in charities but always secretly. She has always shunned publicity and is the only celebrity who has not given a single interview or appeared before the media. She attends kitty parties among the circle of her close friends. Whatever she wins in the game of rummy, she gives away as tips to the staff members of the hostess. As in rummy, so in life, she has given away her winnings and borne the losses alone with great dignity. Her magnanimity is unbounded. Sunil Dutt and Nargis were invited to the wedding of Rishi Kapoor and Neetu Singh. Raj Kapoor was extremely tense and jittery but his wife was calm and composed. When Nargis told her that as mother and wife today, she can understand the trauma she must have undergone during the years when she was playing an important role in her husband's life, both on and off screen, Krishna promptly put Nargis at ease by advising her to discard her sense of guilt on that account, as Raj was a compulsive romantic and had she not been there, someone else would have. It was her destiny, she declared with rare dignity.

From left to right: Raj Kapoor, Neetu, Sanjay Dutt, Nargis, Rishi, Sunil Dutt and Krishna Kapoor

Raj Kapoor has portrayed virtue, simplicity and compassion on screen, Krishna Kapoor practised these virtues in life. In fact, Raj Kapoor's screen persona is a virtual reality of Mrs Krishna Kapoor. In a way, Raj Kapoor portrayed her values on screen without being conscious about it even himself.

Papa was busy making a name for himself. And initially, mummy could never take much interest in his film life. Soon she started to feel a gap growing between her husband and herself.

Krishna Kapoor, wife

The fault, I realize now, was as much mine as his. I was immature, lacked confidence and the capacity to look at life beyond healthy children and a few luxuries. Take this from me, every dark night has a beautiful dawn. And time erases pettiness and tension. What use are passions, possessions when we die? I stopped worrying over minor things and started counting my blessings. All that I have today is my husband. He earned it by the sweat of his brow. There is not a couple whose marriage does not face crises. Much depends on the woman, who should change with time as her husband changes with the years. Raj-ji was a simple man. He always slept on the floor. In London, at the Hilton hotel, he was ticked off for pulling the mattress down and when he did it a second time he was fined. He paid the fine every day till he left the hotel. It was the simple folks who attracted Raj-ji. He was happiest at his farm at Loni, near Poona. He had several friends among the farmers. They conversed in Marathi, cooked and ate together. Raj-ji himself was an expert cook. Biryani and chicken were his specialties. But the great cook was a poor eater! The showman in him could not bear to see a poorly laid table, it had to overflow, but he himself merely nibbled at the food and then settled for his usual pao and eggs and a little daal. For years, he ate no lunch, only dinner. At parties, he merely pretended to eat. When he got home sometimes in the early hours of the morning, he promptly had his fried eggs.

Raj-ji was a god-fearing man; he visited practically all the shrines. Once he

undertook a hazardous journey to Amarnath, the cave temple in the Himalayas. Nobody at home knew about it until he returned. Raj-ji had said that he was going for a short holiday to Kashmir. His religious faith was one of the things that he did not like to show off.

He was also deeply attached to his family and children. I remember, when Ritu got married and she was departing for Delhi with her husband, everyone broke down. Only Raj-ji controlled himself admirably. He waited for her to leave and then got into his car and drove to the studio. After an hour when one of his personal attendants walked into his cottage, his master was still in tears. That was Raj Kapoor, the father. But he did not like others watching him at such moments. When Daboo (Randhir) and Chintoo (Rishi) were late returning from parties, Raj-ji would keep awake. But he never let them know that. Nor did he say anything to them the next morning. He would only tell me to talk to them because he was not willing to sacrifice his popularity even at home!

On Sundays, Dr Ghanti, the family physician, would come home. They were chums. They would start ringing up the bookies. When Raj-ji said 'Dus' into the phone you would think that he was betting ten thousand but it was really just ten rupees, five his and five the doctor's! And when they won fifteen or twenty rupees, they would go mad with excitement. The telephone would ring and Raj-ji would jump to answer it, the syringe hanging from his arm, and Dr Ghanti running after him, holding on to it! This was their Sunday routine for years. They were like little boys together. In fact, Raj-ji was a great lover of comics, the funny ones, like *Archie* and *Sad Sack*. The pictorial presentation of an idea has always fascinated him.

If I had to live my life again I would choose the same man. Ten times over and, mind you, go through the same experience too. It is only a dark night that gives the glow to dawn.

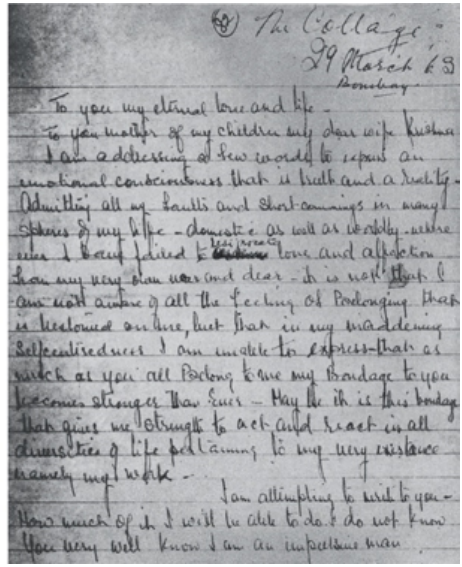
Raj Kapoor on his wife, Krishna

Do you know how Kalidasa has described the ideal wife? As one who can be her husband's friend, philosopher and guide when he is confused and needs to be shown the right direction, who can mother him when he is hurt, and who can nurse him when he is ill. Krishna has been all these to me. Krishna is my shakti, a perfect woman, who has played her role of ardhangini to perfection. She stood by me through thick and thin. She has been my anchor. Not every man is fortunate enough to have a wife like Krishna, but then, not every woman is fortunate enough to have Raj Kapoor for a husband!

~

In a letter written by Raj Kapoor to his wife before leaving for the North-Eastern Frontier at the time of India's war with China, he said, 'To you, my eternal love and life, to you, mother of my children, my dear wife Krishna, I am addressing a

few words to express an emotional consciousness that is the truth and reality. Admitting to all my faults and shortcomings in all spheres of my life, domestic as well as worldly. Whenever I have failed to reciprocate love and affection from my very own near and dear, it is not that I am not aware of all the feelings of belonging bestowed on me, but that in my maddening self-centredness I am unable to express that as much as you all belong to me, my bond to you becomes stronger than ever. Maybe it is this that gives me strength to act and react to all diversities of life pertaining to my very existence, namely, my work … You know very well I am an impulsive man. But one thing is clear to me, and that is we both have to create an atmosphere of communion with each other. Let me be the first to reach out and tell you no matter what I am, who I am and where I am, the imperishable truth is that I am, and I am yours. With all my love, ever yours, Raj.'


The Cottage
29 March 68
Bombay

To you my eternal love and life –
To you mother of my children my dear wife Krishna
I am addressing a few words to express an emotional consciousness that is truth and reality. Admitting all my faults and short-comings in many spheres of my life – domestic as well as worldly – where ever I have failed to reciprocate love and affection from my very own near and dear – it is not that I am not aware of all the feeling of belonging that is bestowed on me, but that in my maddening self-centredness I am unable to express that as much as you all belong to me my bondage to you becomes stronger than ever – May be it is this bondage that gives me strength to act and react in all diversities of life pertaining to my very existence namely my work –
I am attempting to write to you – How much of it I will be able to do I do not know. You very well know I am an impulsive man.

While entertaining the soldiers, Raj Kapoor said, 'I would like you to know that you are not alone here to defend our motherland. We, the artists, the whole nation, are behind you. The stronger and braver you are, the safer will be your brothers, sisters, children and parents and our whole country.'

Raj Kapoor on his wife, Krishna

When I sit back at the end of the day, I feel very sorry for all the pain that I have given you. How can I bring those days back for you? But show business is such that a woman has to be understanding because there are constant emotional involvements, because the work is such.

A lesser woman would have deserted me long ago. It is Krishna who has made my home. *Unhone mera ghar banaya, basaya, sajaya aur sanwara* (she made my home, inhabited it, adorned it, and cared for it).

For Krishna, though, the mere fact that her husband appreciated her patience and love was all the compensation she wanted. Her love borders on devotion and determination.

~

Raj Kapoor had first seen Krishna in a plain white cotton sari and that started the recurring image of the 'woman in white', so important in his life. His leading ladies, Nargis, Padmini, Vyjayanthimala, willingly accepted the mould which he had sculpted, and each emerged as the woman in white bearing the stamp of Raj Kapoor. Some say that Raj Kapoor fell in love with his heroines, others say that they fell in love with him. The truth is he loved only his wife, Krishna.

As he said, 'My heroine, Nargis, is my inspiration and my wife Krishna is my energy. My wife is not to be an actress and my actress is not to be my wife.'

Randhir Kapoor, Son

Raj Kapoor's eldest son Randhir was born on 15 February 1947. The same year Raj Kapoor started shooting his first film, *Aag*. With the birth of his first child also arrived his first car.

His was an absolutely one-track mind. His whole life revolved around his films. That is all he could think or talk of. With drinks, without drinks, before food, after food, morning, afternoon, noon or night, at home or in the studios, his conversation was only about films. Even if you talked about outer space or Donald Duck, he would bring the conversation back to films.

From left: Babita, Kareena, Samaira, Karisma, Kiaan and Randhir Kapoor

His films, that is. He was not in the least concerned about what kind of films others were making, he was interested only in his own. He rarely stepped outside the R.K. Studios gates if he could avoid it. This was the oasis that he created for himself.

Dad never expected us to come out with flying colours in our studies. You see, he knew our capacity. He was happy if we passed the exams. But it was important that we developed the ability to face life independently. I remember one of the few times Papa was a bit annoyed with us, Chintoo and me. We were stepping out in pants and kurta. He shouted: 'Don't try to attract attention by dressing ridiculously. Let your work attract the attention of the world.'

Raj Kapoor on Randhir Kapoor

When my father asked me whether I would like to continue education or take up a career, I had told him that I wanted to join films. And he readily acceded to my request and took me to Chandulal Shah and Devika Rani to start my training in films as an assistant. I recalled this incident when I faced a similar situation with my own son Daboo (Randhir). So, I told him to start his training as an assistant director. For, I believe and from my own experience I have learned, that it is only when you work as an assistant that you get a

thorough knowledge of the intricacies of film-making.

Randhir and Raj with Prithiviraj Kapoor

Randhir and Raj Kapoor

When Daboo was working as an assistant, he got offers to play the hero. When he sought my permission, I told him that if he wanted to start his career as an artist, he should start it with R.K. As a father and film producer in my own right, I felt that I should have the privilege to present my son to the audience. Not only that, I wanted him to make a tribute as a director as well. All that we needed was a story that would suit and enthuse him. In Virendra Sinha's *Kal Aaj Aur K*al we found the right material. Hearing the story from Virendra Sinha, I felt that here was a story which was written for us. For it had an ideal role not only for Daboo but also for myself and my father Prithviraj-ji. Just as Papaji had stopped playing romantic leads when I made my debut in 1947 and switched to character-acting, I also decided with the debut of my son as a hero to switch to character-acting and play a father's role in keeping with reality. In *Awara*, Papaji had played my father, now he had agreed to play my father again and also grandfather to my son in the film. Indeed, he was as keen as I was to help Daboo make a successful debut both as an artist and a director.

Babita, Randhir Kapoor's wife

As a child, I remember Papa used to play tennis with my father Hari Shivdasani, at the CCI Club. Frequently after the game, he used to visit us at our home, which was opposite the club. I remember as a child I would sit on his lap, and he would ask me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I would say that I wanted to be an actor and he would always encourage me and say one day I would surely be a big star. It is strange but Lolo (Karisma) also would be asked the same question by her grandfather! Lolo also used to say that I want to be an actor and he would say the same line that one day you will be a big star. I remember the day Lolo was born, the entire family was with me by my side at Breach Candy Hospital, except my father-in-law. He said that he would come to the hospital only if the newborn had blue eyes! Thank the lord that Lolo had deep blue eyes, like my father-in-law.

From left: Raj Kapoor, Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, Randhir Kapoor, Babita and Sharmila Tagore

Karisma Kapoor, Randhir Kapoor's daughter

As a teenager, I always said I want to work in movies, I wanted to be an actor. I remember my grandfather telling me, 'To be an actor is not a bed of roses! If you want to be an actor, walk on the thorns and work on the soil to make the roses grow and then become an actor. You have to aim to always be the best. You should always have that ambition to be an achiever.' I still have the cookbook which my grandfather gifted me, when I became a teenager. He wrote in the book, 'The way to a man's heart is through his stomach. You should practice on Dadaji.' I have vivid memories of going on Sundays to R.K. Studios to watch the shooting of the film *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*. I was ten years old then. I would

silently wish I could also contribute to the legacy of the Kapoor dynasty.

Randhir and Babita Kapoor with Karishma and Kareena

Kareena Kapoor Khan, Randhir Kapoor's daughter

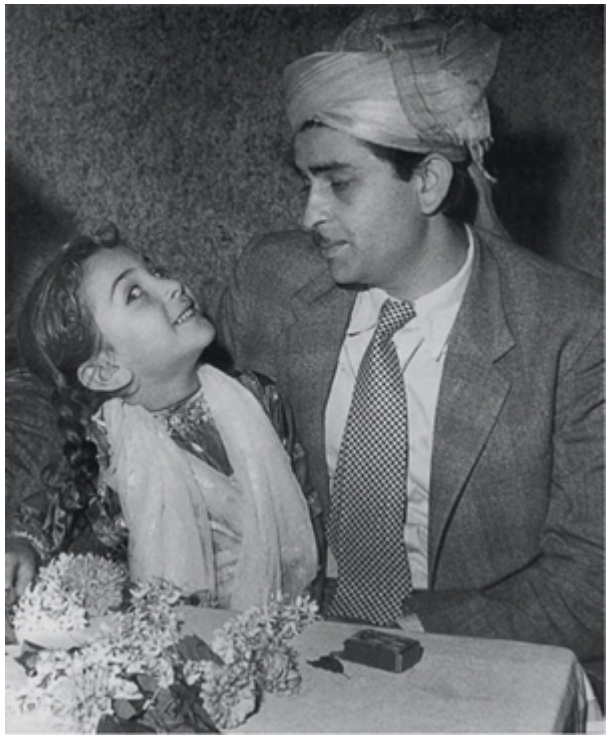
I remember, the first mango that I had in my life was the one that Dadaji gave me! Riddhima, Ranbir and I were sitting on the swing with Dadaji in his verandah. He had only one mango and I was very excited that he gave it to me and not to Ranbir or Riddhima who were also eyeing the same. He loved his mangoes and kept them locked in his cupboard! Ever since, I have been obsessed with mangoes. Dadaji's parties were a legend! Lolo and I would accompany Mom and Dad to these lavish parties. All stars and anybody who was somebody in the film industry was there. Ranbir, Lolo and I were very star-struck! We would watch and be so enamoured with all the glitterati. We have grown up with such exposure. No wonder when we grew up, we all chose to join the film industry. Dadaji was given so much love and respect, it was awesome. I wanted to receive the same. I was so motivated by Dadaji that I wanted nothing more than being the best and be right at the top of the industry. If I am anything today, I owe it all to my mentor, my Dadaji!

Ritu and Rajan Nanda with son Nikhil, daughter-in-law Shweta, daughter Nitasha and grandchildren Navya and Agastya

Ritu Nanda, daughter

I was born on 30 October 1948. R.K. Films acquired its first office in May 1948 and in October the same year, Papa released his second film, *Barsaat*. It was then that he acquired his second car, that sleek convertible Oldsmobile which was a flamboyant part of Papa's career in the 1950s. The film *Andaz*, with Raj Kapoor as the hero, was also released in 1948 and earned him a lot of popularity.

My most prized possessions of my father's memory are the words he always said: Keep the grace of your heritage and do good deeds. Never embarrass your father. Always be in the heart of your husband. Your sincerity to him is your jewel. Your service to him is your duty. May you have no pain in your life. May you bloom and flourish in your home. Always remember my words and gradually forget me. I will always love you. You are my life.



With Ritu Nanda

Raj Kapoor with daughter Ritu and Rajan Nanda

Rajan Nanda, Ritu Nanda's husband

On my wedding night, I was given a room to retire after a long night of hectic activity. When I got to the room, just as I was looking to the prospect of taking off all ornaments, relieving myself from the weight of what I was wearing, and getting into a relaxing mode, I heard a knock on my door. I was informed that my father-in-law wanted to meet me.

When I went to meet him, he made me sit down next to him. This was my first experience alone with him. He said, 'You're married today. You're married to the daughter of the woman I have spent my life with. I can only give you a warning that life will be challenging and dominating with your wife.'

He spoke to me well past 2 a.m. He said, 'I want you to live life with values and understand that the wealth of a man is inside him and not around him, which means that you have to be committed to what you have to do in life. This is what builds your life and reputation. You must live from what you earn and thus keep your hands not for asking but for giving! Life is based on values you demonstrate in the way you live and remember life will give you what you give it.' Another valuable advice he gave me was that I should live my life with full commitment and the only way is to have sincerity and go all the way in whatever I do with a sense of responsibility. He went on to say, 'The deeper you get in whatever you do, the wider it opens up.'

This advice has helped me to earn respect in what I have done in my life. I thought a lot on the advice I received, it was precious and later I realized how rewarding it has been to me in my life. The world looked at him as a superstar, I

look at him as a special human being who had the ability to judge people and their character. I admire him and respect him greatly, he gave me opinions on people he did not know well and yet understood instinctively during his short meetings with them. He was a man with a lot of depth and human capability. I once asked him, 'What do you attribute to your success in the films you made when you started your film career?' He said, 'When I made these films, India had gone through a partition, there was stress in the country, the war had just ended in Europe, the society's mood was morose and sad. So, I made films about emotions, dreams, love and thus my films, *Awara*, *Shree 420* were about living a life simply and finding happiness in it.'

This was the psychology when he was conceiving his stories and how well they connected with society's real concern.

Nitasha Nanda, Ritu Nanda's daughter

Nanaji always said, 'Look upon yourself before talking about others.' That's a great learning for anybody. He also taught me that, 'Awareness is the biggest knowledge in itself. Be it about your environment, your work or anything else.' He used to take us to a roadside restaurant called Ravi Café and to Geeta Bhavan at Chembur station. We used to love its dosas and idli.

I remember feeding grain to his pets, the chicken in his farm at Pune and also at his residence in Bombay. He used to tell me that just like the chicken who used to come to him to eat dana whenever he called them, I should also come to Bombay to meet him, whenever he said, 'Aah, aah, aah! (come, come, come!).' I always found that very sweet and loving.

I still remember, on my eighteenth birthday, Nanaji had organized a small and nice Chinese lunch for me. My mom, brother and my maasi were there too. It was

a very special birthday for me. I have great memories of him. He was amazing and so humble. I remember going to Chembur for the holidays. He used to be aware of everybody's plans and what everyone wanted to do. He would not sleep until everyone was back in the house from their day's activities. He was a simple and an amazingly down-to-earth person. I'm glad that I went to see him receive the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award. My mom was not in town, as she had gone to Pune to attend the board meeting of Indian Airlines. After receiving the award, he was hospitalized, where he passed away. That was the last time I met my grandfather.

Nikhil Nanda, Ritu Nanda's son

My grandfather always called me Nicolie. He never addressed me as Nikhil. It was, I guess, his love for Russia that he thought of this nickname for me. He also gifted me a cap which had this name on it. I look at this as his love for me and I always enjoyed him calling me by that name. One night, when I was visiting my grandparents in Bombay, Nanaji wanting to spend time with me, woke me up in the middle of night and we spent a few hours chatting together. He embraced me and asked me to sit next to him. He was warm and loving and wanted to part with a few deep insights about life. He said, 'Have you looked at yourself in the mirror?' I said, 'Sure, I do so every morning while brushing my teeth.' He went on to say, 'You need to look at it a bit deeper, understand it, reflect on it, ask yourself what you feel about it. Have a real conversation with it and be honest about what you see. If you love yourself first, the world shall too, if you feel that you need to work on certain areas, do so. You have to be your own best critic first and you must love and have confidence in what you see. If you start to have this confidence, you won't need the endorsement from others. I do this too. Before I worry about what the world thinks of me as an actor, I know what I think of myself. I resonate what I feel about myself and thus what the world thinks and feels about me. Don't waste your time on unproductive things that don't add value to your learning. Spend time in doing things that help you to improve yourself to achieve life's purpose. Do things that help you to become the man you want to be. Create habits that will constantly help you to become a better you.'

With grandson Nikhil Nanda and daughters Ritu Nanda and Reema Jain while shooting Ram Teri Ganga Maili

I have carried this advice till date and often reflect on it, one of the most insightful advice that I got from him. I asked him once, 'How does one become a good actor?' He smiled and looked at me and said, 'It is important that one is a good human being and if you are, the essence of that goodness will come out, because the camera has the ability to capture it.' I was amazed with this answer. Today when I reflect, I think, does it also apply to the corporate sector? Don't mistake goodness with softness!

Rishi Kapoor, son

Raj Kapoor is not only my father, he is also my mentor and my guru. Whatever I know and whatever I am today, is all because of him. He has made three films with me. *Mera Naam Joker*, *Bobby* and *Prem Rog*. All the three films at their time were of great significance. There was a great difference in working with a director like Raj Kapoor and my other directors. Raj Kapoor was also an actor. He understood the difficulties of an actor. He would show you how to perform a shot, this would make it easy for the actor to deliver the required shot. But this did not happen with me. He left it to me to perform the way I could!

Rishi Kapoor with Ranbir, Riddhima, Neetu Kapoor and granddaughter Samara

The first song that I enacted was '*Main shayar toh nahin*' in the film *Bobby*. I was very excited that I was becoming a hero of a film and with the fact that I have to sing a song in the film. I reached the set. The chief assistant of Papa in this film was a childhood friend of mine. I asked him who was the dance master doing the choreography of the song we were shooting. He informed me that no one had come yet. Meanwhile, my father arrived on the sets. He enquired with the people concerned on the sets if all preparations for the required shot was ready. I immediately reacted and said, 'Saab-ji'—I always addressed my father formally on the sets—'but there is no dance director on the sets!' He replied, 'But what is the need? Just stand and sing!' I responded, 'I don't know what to do!' He said, 'Just try, you will know it all!'

It was his thinking that if he had got a dance master for me, I would only imitate him. The dance master would probably give me steps he had given other actors, stuff others had done before. Everyone would then say that I was imitating them. Papa wanted me to create my own identity.

If you look at the song now, you will know how awkward I was in it … lifting my

hands up like a policeman! I knew absolutely nothing. Not that I know much now! I now understand that this was a good education I received from him. He threw me in the swimming pool, leaving me to fend for myself. That is how I learnt. I learnt to trust myself, that I can do it! I was taught that whichever song you sing, match the pitch of the song. Your veins should be seen and should swell up and look real that the audience would believe as though as you are really singing the song at that pitch.

I recall a story which my grandfather Prithviraj Kapoor always narrated of an itinerant drum beater, who used to balance a long pole on his shoulder and make his son climb to the top of the pole. After performing his roadside acrobatics, the son would ask the father, 'Bapu, how was my performance?' The father would always reply: 'Kasar rahi, kasar rahi (could be better).' One day the son asked his father: 'I perform so well, people are so happy to see me, but you are never satisfied. What is lacking in me, after all?' The father replied: 'The day you excel on the pole and achieve everything in life, and I do not say "kasar rahi", you will fall down. That is why I will always say kasar rahi!' My father believed in the same philosophy.

Raj Kapoor with (left) Rishi Kapoor and (right) Randhir and Rishi Kapoor

Today, I have received the Best Actor award for my performance in *Mera Naam Joker*, but my father still said, 'It is wonderful to see Chintoo get the National

Award for his performance in my film *Mera Naam Joker*. What could make a father happier than to see in his lifetime his son's progress and success? He has the blessings and the love of the masses, but I will still say, "kasar rahi, kasar rahi".'

Neetu Kapoor: Rishi Kapoor's wife

It was amazing the way Papa (Raj Kapoor) asked my mother for my hand for his son. He begged my mother and said, 'Give the hand of your daughter to my son.' My mother was absolutely stunned. For such a giant of a man like Raj Kapoor to so humbly say this made my mother very emotional. She had tears in her eyes. And I was engaged. There were three ladies who were engaged that day. I was one of them. They were all from within the family. They all looked very happy. I was also very happy.

One day when we were at our farm in Loni, Papa was cooking for us. While having dinner, he said to me, 'You are ok! But, I am not so sure of the other two!' This was amazing. In a year's time the other two engagements broke! Papa was a very intuitive and sensitive person. He had a deep understanding of human emotions. I got married in 1980. I was so young and was very nervous as to how it would be as a new family member in a new set-up. I wanted to impress my in-laws so I started learning to cook.

One day I cooked kaali daal that I had learnt. Everybody was very excited. Even though it was the most horrible preparation, Papa praised me to the skies! He said, 'I have never had better kaali daal in my life.' I was in tears when I realized that it was so bad but just to make me feel good, he ate to encourage me and to make me happy. The greatest quality in a person is to make the other person feel good. This was Papa's way to make the other person feel very important even if he was not!

Once I was at a party. I knew that Papa was a big drinker but I asked him for a soft drink. He said to me, 'Here comes my Krishna!' We all know how important his wife was in his life. For him to compare me with her, even if he didn't mean

it, was a huge compliment! I felt very good about it. Once, he told me that Padmini's song in *Prem Rog*, '*Yeh galiyan yeh chaubara*', was inspired by me! He was fascinated to see me happily dance and enjoy my wedding! In the same film, in another song he added a humming sound that his granddaughter use to make! It was fascinating to observe the sensitivity of the genius, how and from such little gestures he picked up emotions in his films.

Once, when I was dating my husband, he was very drunk when he went home. I was very angry with him. I called him up and fired him on the phone. I was stunned when I heard from the other end, only one sentence, 'Don't you see a difference in the voice between a father and a son?' Their voices were so similar and I was very embarrassed!

I remember on one occasion, when Papa was in Breach Candy Nursing Home, I had gone to visit him. Meeting one of my close and elder relatives there, I went forward to pay my respects by touching the person's feet. A gesture which was traditionally followed by the family. I was very hurt and embarrassed as this gesture was rejected by the person concerned. Papa observed this. I left the nursing home and soon received a phone call from Mummy saying that it was Papa's instructions that I don't have to give this respect in future to the person concerned! Papa was a very observant person and by this gesture, he protected my self-esteem with the family.

Riddhima Kapoor Sahani, Rishi Kapoor's daughter

I was only eight when Dadaji passed away. From the little that I can remember, he was a doting grandfather. He used to call me 'princess' and treated me like one. The moment he would come back from the studio, he would take me in his lap and give me a tight hug. He had pet names for all the kids in the family. I have spent some incredible moments with Dadaji. I still remember that on Sundays he used to take us to a nearby Udupi restaurant in Chembur. He was a great foodie himself, he would order everything from idli to uttapam and dosa to vada. Later, he would take us to a water park at Navi Mumbai and we all would swim till late in the evening. We also had this ritual of getting a chocolate each for kissing him goodnight. But other than that, we would not dare to enter his room. No one can replace him; not even my dad or my husband.

Ranbir Kapoor, Rishi Kapoor's son

Once, when Dadaji was going abroad, I requested him to bring me a suit. And I remember he got me about a dozen suits! I recall that I wore one of them for the premiere of Dadaji's last unfinished film *Henna*, which was later completed by my uncle, Randhir Kapoor. Whenever my mother fired me, I would call my grandfather, who would immediately call my mother and plead to her, saying, 'Please scold me but do not get angry with Ranbir.'

He was very fond of me. Keeping fowls was one of Dadaji's hobbies, and part of his daily routine was to feed them, calling out 'Aa, aa, aa'. He would give names to each one of his fowls and often used the same tone, jokingly, to call his grandchildren!

Rima Jain, daughter

With Rima, Raj Kapoor's relationship was always very special. So was their way of resolving their differences. If there was a quarrel, both would sulk. Then, to make peace, he would scribble her a little note: 'I know if I am no more, you will not miss me because while I am alive you could not care less. It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. There is a lot of love to give and receive. Put it to a better use for those who deserve it. Marriage is important, but why is it important? A woman is complete only when she procreates. In a woman's life, the greatest achievement is when she gives birth to a child and because of the social norms and rules, one needs to be married to have a child. A woman is always looked up to. A woman doesn't have to fight and say she is above the man. If I live to see you married, I will give you a crystal wedding.'

Rima Jain with her husband Manoj and sons Armaan and Aadar

It was the summer of 1972 when Ritu and I had a five-day holiday with our parents at Interlaken, Switzerland. I had just recovered from jaundice and Ritu, for the first time, since her marriage in 1969, was having a holiday with our parents. Papa was very fond of eating and drinking at the best of the restaurants but was absolutely against shopping! Shopping was taboo! Immediately opposite our suite in the Beau Rivage Hotel, was a souvenir shop. Both Ritu and I were looking for an opportunity to go there and buy something. One day, Papa had planned to take us out of Interlaken to a small village called Bleusea, one hour

away by train, which specialized in fresh trout from its river and a special local wine. Papa had gone for his bath when Mummy who knew about our eagerness to shop, prompted us to quickly go down, shop and wait for them to come to leave for Bleusea. Ritu and I jumped at this much-awaited opportunity and were soon at the shop, buying souvenirs. We finished our purchases and were paying at the till when Mummy and Papa came down. Seeing us shop, Papa grumbled and moved on. By the time, we paid and came out of the shop, they were gone. We looked left and we looked right but they were not to be seen. They had either turned east or west. We turned west, looking for them. They had obviously turned east. We went to one shop and then to the other and soon realized we were all lost! At this stage, both Ritu and I decided to continue shopping and enjoy this beautiful quaint town. We had coffee, we had cake, we went to a casino, we bought balloons and shopped. We were tired after about two hours and took a horse-driven carriage and were returning to our hotel, when we suddenly saw our parents walking from the front side towards us. We stopped our carriage to give them a ride. Papa was red in his face and furious at us. Mummy retorted that they had been to the police station and the hospital looking for us. They even thought that we had been kidnapped! Irritated, Papa said that he had changed his mind and had decided not to take us to lunch as punishment. I remember nudging my mother and telling her to agree as it was better to stay back in the town and go shopping. We dropped Papa at the hotel. He told us to be ready for dinner at 6 p.m. and went away. Mummy, Ritu and I were now free to do what we wanted. By the side of our hotel was a small port where local boats frequented. We decided to have a boat ride and jumped into one such boat. We had a nice hot coffee and cake and were enjoying the beautiful visuals when Mummy asked me to enquire as to when would the boat return. Lo and behold! We were stunned when we learnt that the boat would only return the next day. We made a big noise with the crew that we had erroneously come to the wrong boat and tried to explain to them that we had to get back. Though they spoke only French, they somehow understood our plight and advised us to get off at a close-by port of some village and try to get on to the other ferry which would take us back to Interlaken. Without thinking, we eagerly jumped off the boat and patiently waited in the quiet, lonely port. The port was closed. There was nobody there at all. We clung on to each other, praying and hoping for the ferry to come. Soon the ferry arrived. We quickly jumped on to it, saying repeatedly, ‘Interlaken Oust.’ They seemed to have understood us and kept assuring us. Soon we reached Interlaken. We rushed to our hotel which was close by and to our room. Papa opened the door. He looked at his watch and said, ‘For once you are on time.’ He was ready to leave for dinner, while we were ready to collapse. Mummy kept pleading with both Ritu and I to agree as Papa was at last in a good mood! Before we knew, exhausted with the stress that we had been through, we found ourselves in a cable car, going for dinner to a restaurant which was on the hilltop!

Manoj Jain, Rima's husband

Son of a family friend of the Kapoor family, Manoj had met Papa several times casually. He recalled one such incidence where not only did he have the privilege of carrying Papa's shopping of his special Black Label whisky but also had the rare opportunity of having a drink of the same, which he was very possessive about and would hoard in his cupboard. Manoj was also my brother Rajiv's dear friend. Rima was very friendly with his sister Renuka. There were times when Papa was suspicious about Rima and Manoj's relationship. His friend, Vishwa Mehra, had mentioned to Papa, 'Do you think there is something brewing between them?' to which Papa had responded by saying, 'No, they are just good friends.' As fate would have it, Rima married Manoj Jain seven months after the death of her father.

Armaan Jain, Rima's elder son

There are not enough words to describe a man of the stature of Raj Kapoor. A visionary, the showman of Indian cinema, who captured the pulse of the common man and portrayed it admirably on celluloid. Raj Kapoor, my legendary grandfather, was a noble man with excessive premonition, who emptied his pockets at once but inspired a million subsequently. I must confess, in my adolescent years, I made an imprudent conclusion that my grandfather was a real-life joker. My childhood infatuation of his enactment in *Mera Naam Joker* stimulated me to ape his mannerism. His powerful lyrics '*Jeena yahan marna yahan isske siva jana kahan*' is a metaphor for his love and passion for cinema. Although I never got an opportunity to meet with Nanaji, he left behind a bouquet of films that enables me to discover him every day. I feel blessed to be able to feel his presence in my life every day.

Aadar Jain, Rima's younger son

I am proud to be the grandson of Raj Kapoor, a man known to the world as the great showman of Indian cinema! I never had a chance to meet him. However, I was fortunate enough to get to know him through stories my mother and grandmother would tell me and through the medium of cinema that reflected his complexities and unique perspective of the world of his films. One of our most cherished childhood memories is eating with my brother while being glued to the television, watching *Mera Naam Joker*. Armaan and I came to believe that our grandfather was in fact a circus clown who lived to entertain people and loved to make everyone laugh. All that Armaan wanted in his birthday party as a child was a joker! He would also want to dress as a joker for his party! This thought really resonated with me as I believe that this is what life is about: to bring joy to people and to try and put a smile on someone's face, in any small way, even if it is occasionally at your own expense. My curiosity about my grandfather only grew as I got older. I watched all his films numerous times and instantly fell in love with his screen persona. It was then that I realized and fully comprehended that what he had achieved was truly remarkable. My grandfather's vision as well as his dedication and passion for cinema is more than inspiring. He truly was a man ahead of his times. I feel immense pride that 'The Raj Kapoor' is my grandfather. Today, as I embark on my own journey of becoming an actor, I hope that he is somewhere watching over me and would guide and bless me.

Rajiv Kapoor, son

At the age of seventeen, I became an assistant director with Rahul Rawail in *Biwi o Biwi*. After this film, I became an assistant director to Papa, who was directing *Prem Rog*. After *Prem Rog* was over, I worked in my first film as an actor, *Ek Jaan Hai Hum*. One day when I had come to meet my mother, he was also there. He looked at me and said, 'I am taking you in my next film, *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*. I was so thrilled to hear this, but I had a problem.

By this time, I had signed seven films and I didn't know what to do with the dates to the producers. I went to Papa for advice. Drawing a line on a piece of paper, Papa told me, 'I am on one side of the line and you are on the other side. Whatever discussions you want to hold with me, whatever advice you want from this side of the line, you will get, but always remember that the other side is totally yours. You have to live your life, not me or anyone else. So, whatever you do, do it with a lot of thought.'

Papa was very spontaneous and great fun to be with. One day while shooting *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*, I was going to the 'Fotokina' fair in Koln. I went to meet Papa before leaving. He said, 'What flight are you going by?' I said, 'Lufthansa first class to Frankfurt.' Papa immediately retorted, saying, 'I am also coming!' I was surprised. We flew to Frankfurt from where we drove to Koln. He was very good to me and gave me some money and the addresses of various places to go to in Koln. I went and had a lot of fun. When I returned, I saw Papa sleeping in my room on the floor, as he always did, and I was shifted with my luggage to another room! He surprised me again!'

With Rajiv on location, Ram Teri Ganga Maili

With granddaughters (from left) Riddhima, Kareena and Karishma

With Randhir and Ritu

With Rishi

With Ritu

With Rima

Randhir and Ritu

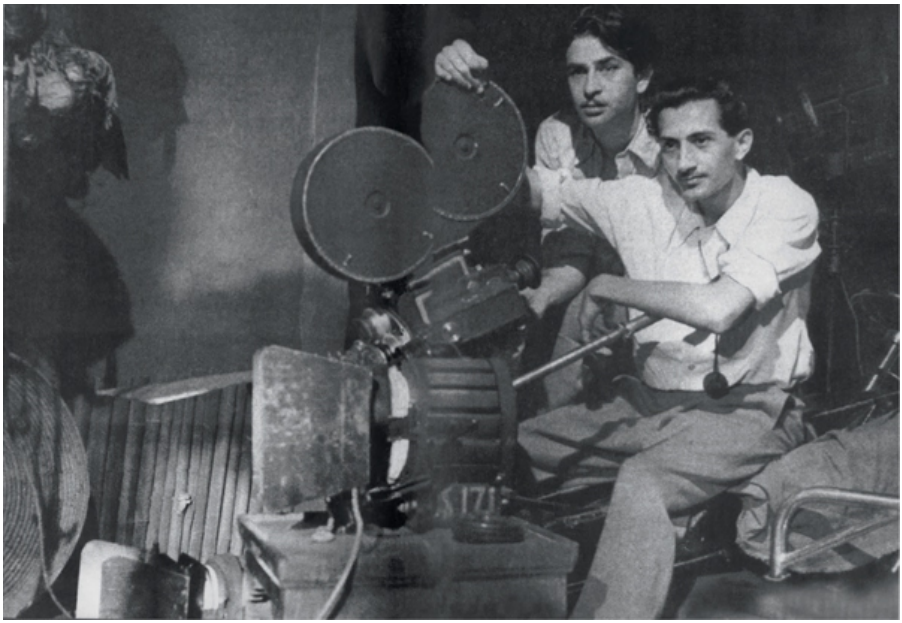
With Rajiv

With Krishna, parents and children – Randhir, Rishi and Ritu

Beginnings

'When I was working with my father in Prithvi Theatre, where I did all kinds of work, right from the lighting of the sets to art direction, he asked me to play a small role on stage as Ramu, the servant, in Deewar. I was young and I could not refuse my father. "Right, sir, I will!" On the opening of that play, I was discovered as an actor after ten years in the film industry.'—Raj Kapoor

Raj Kapoor with Kidar Sharma



My becoming an actor was an accident. I have always wanted to be a film-maker. I do not have many academic qualifications to my credit, except for those ten years of toil as an assistant, literally sweeping floors on film sets, shifting furniture and props. I have worked in every department of the film industry, right from the laboratory to the cinema. I should credit this to my father. When I wanted to leave school, my father asked me, 'Why do you want to leave?' I said, 'Sir, if I graduate, what happens? If you want to become a lawyer, you go to a law college; if you want to become a doctor, you to go a medical college; and if you want to be a film-maker, where do you go?' My father did not have an answer. There were no film institutes in India. The only institutions were the studios. I said, 'I don't want to be a lawyer, I don't want to be a doctor. The profession I like is what you are doing, and the only way to learn is to get myself enrolled into some studio.' That is how I began my career, as the sixth or seventh assistant, trolley-puller, clapper-boy, somewhere in the laboratory picking up odd shots and in the editing department looking at the use of the gamma plus (the solution used for editing). That gave me a lot of basic training about the fundamentals of cinema.

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Raj Kapoor made his acting debut as a child actor in Debaki Bose's *Inquilab* in 1935. His second appearance was in Kidar Sharma's *Gauri*, released in 1943. The

same year, he appeared in *Hamari Baat*. In 1946, he did Bhalji Pendharkar's *Valmiki*. In 1947, he played the role of Narad Muni in Mohan Sinha's *Chittor Vijay*. Mohan Sinha repeated him in his film *Dil ki Rani* in 1947. He did a role with Kamini Kaushal in *Jail Yatra*.

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In 1944, Mr Kidar Sharma gave me my first lead as an actor in his film *Neel Kamal*. I had been his juniormost assistant for three years. One of my tasks was to give the clap before every shot. I had a good vibe with the cameraman, and he had agreed to take a close-up of me before every shot and give me the photographs. I used to comb my hair immaculately and then bend my face a little forward over the clapperboard to get a nice close-up. No one had noticed this till, one day, I clapped hard and moved away as usual but this time the actor's beard got caught between the clapperboard and the stick. The entire unit burst out laughing and a furious Sharma-ji gave me a stinging slap on my face. I was stunned but I never said a word. I knew the mistake was mine. I walked quietly off the set. As a result of this episode, I got my first lead role. Sharma-ji later said, 'I was struck by the depth and pain in those intense eyes.' I started working. But even though I became a star, I had something else on my mind. The money that I got from acting, I saved, and that is how I became a producer, director and an actor, all in one, at the start of my career. My own R.K. Films was thus born in the year 1947. I have never launched a film primarily to launch any son of mine as an actor. Look back carefully, and you will see that what I am saying is right. I am a film-maker first and foremost. Raj Kapoor the father, the brother, the husband, the lover, all of them are secondary to Raj Kapoor the film-maker. I would much rather be a bad father, but I will never compromise my integrity as a film-maker or do anything which belittles that credit title of mine: 'Directed and edited by Raj Kapoor'. To me the motivating force behind the making of a film is its theme. It must fascinate me. It must strike the deepest chord within me. Once I have decided on my subject, I cast accordingly. My script decides my cast, my cast does not decide my script. What pleases me is that all of us Kapoors are involved with films in one way or another. I remember, a few years ago, when my grandson was born, I received a telegram saying: 'Congratulations to the whole industry on the arrival of a new actor in its fold!' Today when my contemporaries are posing with young actresses, I am doing so with my granddaughters. Randhir's daughters Karisma and Kareena are the fourth generation of Kapoors in the Indian film industry.

Heroines

'Nargis as a person was, I think, a very noble lady, who could sense the pain, the sorrow, the anxiety of anybody who came to talk to her ... She could generate in a person a certain spiritual power, which would vitalize that person to work and to venture into anything.'—Raj Kapoor

Nargis was my inspiration, meri sphoorti. Yes, my wife has been shakti, and all my heroines have been my sphoorti. My wife is not to be my actress, and my actress is not to be my wife.

Raj Kapoor on Nargis

I was married and a father when I made *Aag*. I was about twenty-two, Nargis, sixteen. On my first meeting with Nargis, at her Marine Drive flat, after ringing the doorbell, I stood there with bated breath. The door opened and what did I see? An angel standing before me. *Woh kisi pari se kam nahin thi* (She was no less than an angel)! She had short hair. *Baalon ki ek latt uski dahini aankh par aayi, aur lag raha tha jaise woh mujhe sirf ek aankh se dekh rahi thi* (A strand of hair fell over her left eye, and it seemed as though she was looking at me with only one eye). That is how I met her and we worked in the film *Aag* and what a great actress she was! I composed a scene in my film *Bobby* which was inspired from real life. The first time I met Nargis was when Shiraz Ali Hakim had built this studio called Famous at Mahalaxmi. It was a new studio and not many producers had filmed

there. I decided to shoot *Aag* there. But before that I wanted to check on the quality of the acoustics, because in those days we had to record the sound along with the visual; there was no such thing as dubbing. When I went to Famous, I discovered that Jaddan Bai (Nargis's mother) was making a film titled *Romeo and Juliet*. She had just packed up and gone home. I decided to visit her. I knocked on the door. What happened then was what you saw in *Bobby*, when Dimple opens the door to find Chintoo there. Jaddan Bai's daughter was making bhajias inside, she heard the doorbell and came running. As she was talking to me she nervously placed one hand on her forehead and all the aata stuck to her maatha and that is exactly how I made Dimple look in *Bobby*.

She asked me who I was and I said I was Prithviraj Kapoor's son, because at the time those were the only credentials I had. She said she knew me very well because she had seen me on stage in *Deewar*. I enquired whether Bibi-ji (that was how Jaddan Bai was known) was home. She said, 'No, nobody is here. I'm alone in the house.' And she asked me to sit down but I said, 'No, no, I must go.' And I left the house, but I didn't leave her behind. Her memory stayed with me. I drove straight to Inder Raj Anand and said, 'I must have this girl in my film … you must write her into the screenplay!' I was planning *Aag* at that time. That was how I met Nargis and cast her. With that tremendous build-up in *Aag*, my audience was waiting to catch a glimpse of her, but they could see her only in the ninth reel! Women have always meant a lot in my life, but Nargis meant more than anybody else. I used to always tell her, 'Krishna is my wife, she is the mother of my children; I want you to be the mother of my films.' And that's precisely what she was.

I have very beautiful memories of Nargis and our work. There was a special delight in her looks, her gait, her speech. You couldn't cast her in just any role, though she had great adaptability. That calibre, that kind of person, you do not find in films any more.

Nargis as a person was, I think a very noble lady, who could sense the pain, the sorrow, the anxiety of anybody who came to talk to her. She could generate in a person a certain spiritual power which would vitalize that person to work and to venture into anything. She understood me and I understood her. You know, I cannot exactly explain my feelings towards her. No, it is not love, though I do like her very much. I think it is the feeling that one good artiste has towards another.

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The iconic last still from Jagte Raho

Given Raj Kapoor's rather chauvinistic attitude towards Nargis and the inherent futility of their relationship, it was inevitable that it should have no future. One day, almost as suddenly as she had entered his life, Nargis opted for marriage with actor, producer and director Sunil Dutt, and quit films. The famous still from *Jagte Raho* was the last frame born of the celebrated association between Nargis and R.K. Films. Nargis was signed for *Mother India* and switched over to the Mehboob camp. And that was the end of a beautiful relationship—a relationship that bore all the strains of public and private life while it lasted, and which enhanced the creativity of a man, possessed as he was by his lady-love, who gave Indian cinema some its most memorable moments. 'It is quite likely,' Raj Kapoor later observed, 'that when Nargis signed up for that film she had, within herself, already mentally resolved the most important dilemma of her life, whether to continue what had become a futureless association with Raj Kapoor, or to make a life of her own, away from R.K.'

Raj Kapoor on Kamini Kaushal, Nimmi and Baby Naaz

I did not discover Baby Naaz, she was brought to me by Prakash Arora. She immediately caught my eye—she was very, very smart … a little girl of seven, very precocious. The

kind I needed for *Boot Polish*. She gave a brilliant performance.

I had met Kamini Kaushal before Nargis, before *Aag*, when I was working in a film called *Jail Yatra*. She put in a very sensitive performance in *Aag*. She was like that, very sensitive, very delicate, very beautiful, very young, very feminine, a good actress and very emotional. What I really admired in Kamini was her honesty, which came through in her performance. When she spoke, you felt, yes, she means it.

Kamini Kaushal

Nimmi in Barsaat

Actually, I didn't discover Nimmi. I borrowed her from Mehboob Khan. Nimmi was the daughter of the famous singer Wahidan, who at that time was working for Mehboob Khan. Nimmi and her mother used to visit the sets of *Andaz* at Mehboob Studios, and that was where I first met her. I asked Mehboob saab if I could cast her in my film *Barsaat* and he said yes. Let me tell you, when I took her in my film, she knew nothing about acting. I had to teach her everything. On screen she looked so fresh, so young, like a rosebud, the way I had visualized the character she played.

Baby Naaz in Boot Polish

Vyjayanthimala on working with Raj Kapoor

I have a beautiful memory of *Sangam*, it was a very interesting role for me. I was working in another Hindi movie with Raj-ji, which was being shot in Madras, called *Nazrana*. Once, during the shots, Raj-ji looked at me and said, 'You are my ideal Radha, for my next film, *Sangam*, will you be Radha?' In the beginning, I was not used to Raj-ji's way of working. He was very demanding at times, a hard taskmaster with a deep passion. But it didn't take me long to understand how he wanted his Radha to be vivacious, lively, bubbly, highly sophisticated, charming and intelligent. For the first time in a Hindi film Europe was displayed beautifully. He had an eye for beauty, he knew the pulse of the audience, and he knew what exactly to give them, in an artistic format. He took a lot of pains and discussed a lot with his cinematographer. The other thing was his remarkable sense of music. His sense of rhythm, his sense of timing, was amazing. I have watched him sit for hours with his music directors wanting a particular melody till he was satisfied. I have worked with all the great film-makers, everybody had their own style, for this type of a role I think I couldn't have done better. Raj Kapoor was one of the greatest film-makers.

Raj Kapoor on Padmini, Simi Garewal and Kseniya Ryabinkina

Padmini's was one of the most important roles in the film *Mera Naam Joker*. She was the waif whom the joker picks up from the streets, grooms and finally makes into a star. When she reaches the top, she abandons the joker and he is left hopeless and alone. The Meena of *Mera Naam Joker* had to go from a tomboyish waif to a sex goddess. I chose Padmini for this role because of her down-to-earth rustic appeal and raw sexuality. She was the only girl I could choose at that point to play a sex goddess with any credibility. The actress goes through the director while portraying a character, acts it as if she is living it, and when she sees herself on screen, she falls in love, 'I have done that? Oh, you are wonderful!' and

thereby she falls in love with the director, the maker of the image she loves. But in fact, she is in love with herself. That is why I think that I have had some beautiful relationships with my actresses, all of them, because they feel that they belong, and this belonging is a very great thing in our profession. Naturally, there is a man involved and a woman involved, but in fact there is nobody beyond oneself that you are in love with.

Padmini in Mera Naam Joker

Simi Garewal in Mera Naam Joker

Mary is the first girl the hero of *Mera Naam Joker* falls in love with, when he is just an adolescent. Mary is his schoolteacher and the embodiment of goodness and purity. She is warm, human, gentle and compassionate. Simi had the right qualities for the role … and she played it to perfection.

I had a clear picture of the trapeze artiste in my mind when I flew to Russia. I

interviewed hundreds of girls that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in Moscow showed me, but none seemed right. Then suddenly one night, while attending a ballet, I noticed a young girl. She was in the back row, she was not even the leading ballerina! But the moment I saw her, I knew she was my Marina, the heroine of *Mera Naam Joker*. Immediately I communicated my decision to the people concerned and one day Ryabinkina flew down to Bombay, and to R.K. Studios, to enact the role. I hired a Hindi tutor for her, since she had to speak a few lines of Hindi in the film. What came through on screen was the beauty and the grace inherent in the ballerina, and, of course, that inexplicable something called 'star quality'.

Raj Kapoor with Kseniya Ryabinkina in a still from Mera Naam Joker

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Raj Kapoor remembers, 'I wanted a new girl for *Bobby*.' It was a family friend, Munni Dhawan, who suggested that he should consider Dimple Kapadia. Raj Kapoor saw her and liked her instantly.

Dimple Kapadia on working in *Bobby*

I was only thirteen years old when Raj saab decided to cast me. My dad became apprehensive. He thought the Kapadia clan might create a rumpus about my joining films. We had already turned down Hrishikesh Mukherjee's offer to play the lead in his film *Guddi*. Raj saab said to my father, 'Let me take a screen test, and then you decide.' I was very keen to do the film, so finally Dad gave in. Daboo was making *Kal Aaj Aur Kal* at the time, and I was screen tested on Daboo's sets. When I walked onto the set with make-up on, I caused quite a stir, Raj saab

told me later. He said that from the first shot I was 'spontaneous and unselfconscious'. After the test, Raj saab asked the sound recordist, Allauddin Khan, '*Kaisi lagi* (What do you think)?' He said, '*Bismillah karo* (Let's start)!' Then came the crucial moment, when he asked the cameraman, Radhu Karmakar, to give his evaluation. 'Star material,' Radhu saab said, and that was it. Raj Kapoor is like a father to me. Subconsciously I have retained everything he taught me. If I can move about in the industry now with a certain degree of self-assurance, it is thanks to him. He taught me all the nuances of acting. He would scold me, cajole me, and pamper me till I gave the right shot. Once when tears rolled down my cheeks without glycerine, he praised me and said, 'Here's my natural born actress.' It was small things like this that made you try harder. You wanted to give your best. I always felt very inadequate because I was always trying to measure up to his standards. He used to enact every little gesture for us. I have never consciously compared myself to other actresses and yet I feel so unsure of myself so often. It is, I realize now, because of the high standards he had set for me, I am always trying to live up to his expectations.'

Rishi Kapoor in Bobby

Dev Anand Recalls

After the premiere of *Ishk Ishk Ishk* at the Metro cinema, Raj Kapoor kissed my actress, Zeenat Aman, in full view of the invited audience, congratulating her for her sparkling performance in the film. That must have made her evening even more sparkling. I felt proud of her, as much as I admired Raj Kapoor for his honest and spontaneous reaction. Complimenting her was indirectly complimenting her mentor, and I inwardly saluted my contemporary film-maker for his sound judgement. Yet I was jealous of him for making advances on what I considered my sole possession, my discovery, my leading lady, and desiring her with a kiss. Time moved on. Suddenly, one day, I felt I was desperately in love with Zeenat—and wanted to say so to her! To make an honest confession, at a very special,

exclusive place meant for romance. I chose the Rendezvous at the Taj, on the top of the city, where we had dined together once earlier. No setting could be more appropriate, I thought of a quiet candlelit table in the corner, the candle throwing its gleam on Zeenat's face, just as the glow of her cigarette lights had lit up her face when I first met her. The dimmed lights of the city below, shining out of the darkness, would certainly light up the romance of the moment. I called her up to say, 'Zeenie, I want to go out on a date with you tonight.' 'But aren't we already going together to a party tonight?' she asked me. 'Of course, we are. But let's just go there only for a brief while, say hi to the gathering, and then quickly disappear!' It was an order, but very lovingly conveyed. She was quiet. 'H-e-ll-o!' I said. 'Yes, I am listening.' 'Is that a date?' I asked. 'If you so desire. See you then!' And she hung up. I picked her up. Together we went to the party. It was on in full force. The first person who greeted Zeenat from a distance was a drunken Raj Kapoor, with a gallant drawl, 'There she is!' He threw his arms around her exuberantly. This suddenly struck me as a little too familiar. And the way she reciprocated his embrace seemed much more than just polite and courteous. She quickly bent down to touch his feet, and then gave me an embarrassed look. Raj grasped my hand in a very tight grip, like never before, as if trying to make amends for some wrong he had done, suddenly overflowing with affection. A hint of suspicion crossed my mind. A couple of days earlier, a rumour had been floating around that Zeenat had gone to Raj's studio for a screen test for the main role in his new movie *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*. The hearsay now started ringing true. My heart was bleeding. 'You are breaking your promise,' Raj was now telling Zeenat in his drunken joviality, 'that you will always be seen by me only in a white sari!' More embarrassment was written large on her face, and Zeenat was not the same Zeenat for me any more. My heart broke into pieces. I wanted to leave the party at once and go off somewhere alone, to be just by myself, so that I could swallow the humiliation thrust on my ego. But a struggle within me transformed itself into a 'to-hell-with-it-all' attitude, and prompted me to say goodbye to a relationship which, though noncommittal emotionally on both sides, had been completely honest. There was no space in it for professional dishonesty. The painting I had made for her started showing signs of cracking. 'How long do you intend on staying here, Zeenat?' I asked her. She looked at Raj, as if seeking his permission to leave. 'Let her stay here, Dev Anand. You too enjoy!' he continued inebriated. 'By all means,' I said. 'Enjoy, Zeenat. Call me up later, when you feel like it!' 'But aren't we supposed to be going to the other place together?' she casually asked. 'Doesn't matter!' I said. The rendezvous had already lost all meaning in my mind. I sneaked out of the place, quietly apologizing to the host. The evening delivered a blow to my ego and my dominating spirit. I had decided on the spur of the moment to tell Zeenat for the first time how much I loved her. And that there was an idea in my mind of another story that would put her on a pedestal as never before, the highest so far. But that was never to be. And so be it! I quickly detached myself, convincing myself that I had blundered, taking too many things for granted. There was no need for

me to let any rancour germinate in my mind against Zeenat. I had prepared her for the world, and she was free to go into the arms of anyone who would help her further her ambitious dreams. A group of chanting devotees was passing by my car. I sat listening to the sound of cymbals and bells. 'Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Ram, Hare Ram, Ram Ram Hare Hare'. I closed my eyes. Zeenat remained beautiful in my eyes, with an honest soul. And Raj a passionate film-maker. I opened my eyes. A streak of lightning seemed to flash across my mind and inspired a new thought. I started pursuing it. A new chapter was thrown open before me, its first pages slowly unfolding. The idea of a new film was slowly coming into focus.

Zeenat Aman on working with Raj Kapoor

Whenever Raj Kapoor started a new film, there was great anticipation regarding his heroine. It was the same with *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*. Raj-ji was still scouting around for a girl when I went across to his cottage, dressed exactly as he had visualized his heroine. When I knocked on the door and he asked who it was, I replied, 'Your future heroine.' I think he was very touched by my dedication and determination to act in his film. He made me do a screen test, which was also an experience by itself. I got the role. I put myself totally in his charge. I was like clay in the hands of a potter. It took us two years to shoot the film. Much of it was picturized at his farm in Pune. We were like one large family there. All of us stayed in his house and we'd dine together, discuss the day's work, see his old films at night. Every morning there'd be fresh flowers for me. He had put up huge blow-ups of me all over the farm—I felt as if I was the only heroine in the world. But behind the camera he was a hard taskmaster. He would not compromise on anything. Whether I had to get drenched in the rain or walk on stones or dance through bramble and bushes, I had to do it. Of course, after the shot, a warm shawl and a spoon of brandy would be ready. And he saw to it that before I walked barefoot through the bushes the whole path was cleaned of thorns! That was Raj-ji's special touch. He made his leading ladies feel very fragile and important.

Raj Kapoor with Zeenat Aman

Zeenat Aman in Satyam Shivam Sundaram

Padmini Kolhapure on Raj Kapoor's role in shaping her career

Whatever I am today is solely because of Raj-ji. When I did *Satyam Shivam*

Sundaram, I started becoming aware as an actress. I was taught to act, taught in the sense that Raj uncle showed me what to do, how to go about things on the set, what facing the camera meant. I was fifteen when I signed *Prem Rog*. Being a leading lady under the R.K. banner was a dream come true for any actress. Raj uncle called me and said, 'You have to play Manorama but I have to get you screen tested, because in *Prem Rog* you have to play a young widow and you should look a widow and not a child.' He screen-tested me and I got the role. I couldn't believe it. And my God, what an experience that was in acting! By the time I was doing *Prem Rog* I had a special rapport with him. He would just sit there on his chair and tell me, 'This is what I want,' and somehow, I knew exactly what he wanted, and he was happy with what I did. I suppose in many ways I grew up with him and learned so much … his intensity, emotions and his passion for film-making were fascinating. He was so aware of himself as a director and he made no bones about it. When he got something he wanted, he would say, 'This is brilliant.' But a lot of times I would be doing a scene and he would not cut the shot where it was meant to be cut; if the flow was good, he would just let the camera go on. Sometimes I would fumble, and forget my dialogues, and he would get angry and give me a firing. That would upset me. At the end of the day I would go and ask him about that and say I didn't like the way he had spoken to me, but he would have forgotten all about it!'

Rishi Kapoor with Padmini Kolhapure in Prem Rog

Mandakini in Ram Teri Ganga Maili

Mandakini's father C. Joseph on Raj Kapoor

For the role of the virginal Ganga in *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*, Raj Kapoor had met several girls, but none seemed to fit the bill, till a girl from Meerut came along. Recalls Mandakini's father, C. Joseph, 'Early in 1982 we read in a film magazine that Raj Kapoor was looking for a new girl to play the lead in *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*. My daughter Yasmin was keen on a film career, so we thought why not give it a try? My daughter and I came to Bombay from Meerut, and went straight to meet Raj Kapoor at R.K. Studios. It was a nice meeting and the great man said he would like to take a screen test. After Raj saab took the test, we went back to Meerut. A fortnight later, an exhibitor in Meerut came rushing to our house—we had no phone—to tell us that he'd received a phone call from Raj saab's Delhi distributor, conveying a message from Raj saab that we should go to Bombay immediately. We were terribly excited and rushed to Bombay. Raj saab showed us the result of our test and said he'd like to take another screen test. By then we were certain that Raj saab had made up his mind in Yasmin's favour. He actually had and then the massive publicity campaign followed.

Raj Kapoor and Nargis in Shree 420

Films

'Despite all problems, despite all obstacles, you go ahead towards the horizon which you have seen. It is there in your eyes, and if I can help (you) through my films, I think I have done something for humanity.'—Raj Kapoor

All Raj Kapoor films began with Prithviraj Kapoor reciting a shloka dedicated to Shiva and blessing the film. After Prithviraj's demise, a statue was installed in his place to bless the films.

With Nargis in Awara

We live in the same world, we share the same realities, hence we often observe the same subjects, but the themes we make out of them set us apart as individuals. Raj Kapoor's philosophy, as observed through his work, was a relationship with the living environment around us. Raj Kapoor excelled in applied philosophy. Applied philosophy is about demonstrating it methodically without preaching and his ability to extend it beyond horizons was either intuitive or sheer genius. Here are a few examples: The young man trying to negotiate his free will with reality and truth in *Aag*, *Aah*, *Awara*, *Shree 420*. The value of human relationships in *Barsaat*, *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai* and *Sangam*. The supremacy of spiritual being over a perceptual life in *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*. The vanity of customs and rituals in *Prem Rog* and his most enduring work, the futility of confining love in *Mera Naam Joker*. Love is a philosophical principle which cannot be restricted to singular affinity. If Raj Kapoor had been alive during the making of the second half of *Henna*, he would not have killed the character at the end. Raj Kapoor never killed his messengers. The success of his philosophy was not in justifying pathos and dark truths. His success was in coming out triumphant at the end. Even at the end of his film *Jagte Raho* he does not leave us with the hopelessness of surviving. He ends it with a positive reminder of who

we are from within.

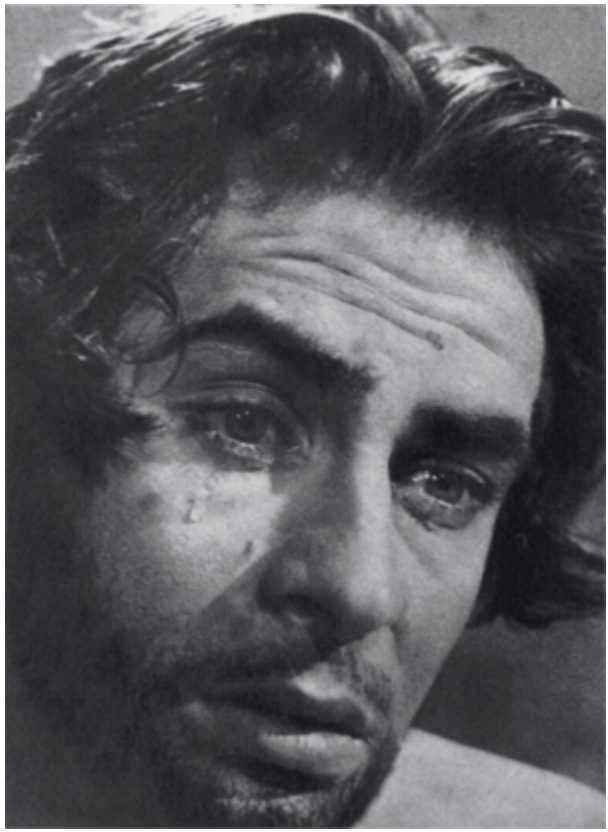
The love, grace and compassion that is our continuing legacy, the romanticism, were the foundations of his films. The narratives in his films flowed like a stream passing harmoniously through various fields, without stopping to admire the beautiful landscapes it had nursed. Even when his subjects dealt with complex human strengths and failings, or when he was critical of social constraints, his narratives remained respectful and honest to its characters. They were not forgiving or patiently tolerant, but they were truthful without being impolite, as if he disowned no one and nothing. As a result, even if a character was villainous, it remained a part of our world. No person or idea was denied its space. He allowed glamour to mix freely with his art.

Zeenat Aman's father in *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* is played by Kanhaiyalal. He is a priest who sings songs in the local temple, respected by all as an honest man suffering due to his ill-fate. Zeenat Aman comes home to her father's cottage for the first time after her marriage to Shashi Kapoor. The pandit is in good health, he has stopped taking medicines. Zeenat observes it and says, 'Your health has improved, Baba, now that you don't have to worry about me any more,' and he replies, 'That is true, now that I am not taking medicines, the illnesses have also stopped coming near me.' I didn't know why this scene was required till a few scenes later, Zeenat gets pregnant; Shashi drags her to the temple and screams at the pandit, '*Pandit! Kehte the meri beti sushil hai, puchho kiska paap pal raha hai iske paet mein, sambhalo apni beti, Pandit*!' The pandit dies of a heart attack on the spot. A similar one is in the first part of *Mera Naam Joker*, when he is a kid, in a public school (played by Rishi Kapoor). The school closes for vacations, the boy, though a local, comes to the station to see off the teacher. A chorus opens, 'O Susanna, don't you cry for me. I am going to have upon my way a banjo on my knees…' This is followed by a very brief lull, the season changes, flowers bloom and the train is back, the kid runs along the train welcoming the arriving children with flowers and a rose for his teacher. For me, that was a high point in the narrative. Taking the boy's infatuation to another level. In *Barsaat*, there is a scene where he plays the '*Danube Waves*' on the violin with such anguish that Nargis begs him to stop. But the next moment, he pulls her head back by the hair and looks straight into her eyes, as if challenging her to match his emotions. That was Raj Kapoor!

Aag (1948)

I will never forget *Aag*, because it is a story of youth consumed by the desire for a brighter, more intense life. It is about all those who flitted like shadows through my own life, giving something, taking something … There was never enough money, it was an uphill struggle from the mahurat of the picture to the day of its release. I mortgaged my car. I even borrowed money from my old servant Dwarka to buy tea and food for my unit. I remember my mother telling my father, using a sarcastic Punjabi phrase, that you can't fry pakoras in spit, meaning that I would never be able to make the film without any

resources. My father just turned around to her and said, 'You wait and watch. The boy will make the film. He has the confidence and the conviction.' I couldn't forget those words, and still haven't, because that's really all you needed in this business. While making *Aag* there were even times when I carried tins of my film from one distributor's office to another, hoping to get buyers for it and finding none—till one day when I arranged for a small group of distributors to see the rushes of the half-completed film. The verdict was: 'This film will not run in any territory.' One distributor had even gone to sleep, he was so bored! But this man never liked seeing rushes anyway. He said to me: 'I don't back a picture, I back a man. Whether this film runs or not, I must have it at all cost.' He shook the hand of an anxious and ambitious film-maker, vigorously, pressing a single silver one rupee coin into his palm, and the deal was struck. From that day onwards, every picture I have made has gone as a matter of course to this distributor of mine who, long before anyone else, had the courage and the vision to back an unknown youngster embarking on the perilous seas of a film career. What convinces me about a script is that there is enough human value in the story. *Aag* had just such a script. It drew upon the experiences of my father (Prithviraj Kapoor's father wanted him to study law but Prithviraj wanted to become an actor). The film is about a young man who wants to be a stage actor, disappointing parents who had hoped for a lawyer. It stirred up a lot of people. It ran for sixteen weeks in those days. It was a totally different film, which came with a bang.



Raj Kapoor in Aag

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The love scenes (in *Aag*) had a direct appeal, and a vivid, new tradition was born. Looking back, it is easy to understand why.

This semi-autobiographical saga of an artist in search of his soulmate marked the debut of Raj Kapoor as a producer-director, and the beginning of the legendary R.K. Films. Though Raj Kapoor romances three women in the film—Kamini Kaushal, Nigar and Nargis—it is the Raj Kapoor and Nargis team that flourished under R.K. Films as the banner began its journey into glory. Raj Kapoor, in the initial stage of his career, dared to appear disfigured in most scenes in the film. *Aag* was a moderate success at the box-office. The Raj-Nargis pair's success in films followed later. It made *Aag* a money-spinner in reruns. Raj Kapoor and Nargis became one of the legendary pairings of Indian cinema. There was truth in them, intense conviction. They blazed a new trail in expression. They portrayed the pent-up longings and desires of youth. Shashi Kapoor acted as a child artist in this film. Singer Mukesh's association with R.K. Films also began with this film. Mukesh sang for all the R.K. Films productions, with *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*

featuring his last recorded song.

Young India's desire for self-realization and the resulting conflicts with their parents' expectations and traditions would become a theme in his work (and then in much of Hindi cinema), but it was only one of several ways in which *Aag* announced its modern idiom. In addition to employing a more naturalistic acting style than was typical in Hindi films, and more humour, he was taking risks with a new approach to eroticism.

Raj Kapoor considered eroticism central to the Indian tradition. This put him at odds with industry mores, according to which showing men slapping women was fine, but caressing them was outrageous. Redefining the cinematic portrayal of love, the film managed a fine balance been realism and propriety. In one scene, the hero he plays tries to rebuff a beautiful actress whom his best friend wants to marry. 'What is it that I have that my friend doesn't?' he asks her. As she makes an ardent list, beginning with his eyes and hair, her lust is unabashed, and a cinema convention of the woman as a passive love-object is toppled. Narrow-minded censors made it impossible to express romance and love on celluloid. For instance, there could be no physical proximity between a man and a woman. One of the first casualties of this archaic and arbitrary rule was Raj Kapoor's *Aag*. There were no kissing scenes in the film, nor did the heroine expose herself, yet the love scenes had to be deleted and replaced with shots of waves crashing against a rocky shore! That rocky shore in fact became a metaphor for future portrayal of passion in Hindi cinema against which waves of film-makers came and crashed.

Barsaat (1949)

There is a story behind the origin of the R.K. emblem. It started with a still from *Barsaat*. That still was beautiful: a man is playing the violin and a woman falls into his arms. He holds the violin in one arm and the woman in the other, both so gracefully, that I thought here is something that could represent creation in totality, and so I made it the emblem of R.K. Films. *Barsaat* was my first major box-office success. A lot of the people who contributed to it were new. I was just one film old. It was Shankar-Jaikishen's first musical score, Shailendra and Hasrat Jaipuri's first film as lyricists, Ramanand Sagar's first film for me, and Nimmi was also a newcomer. *Barsaat* was the very first of my films for which Lata Mangeshkar sang. The music also contributed significantly to the success of the film.

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This romantic tale written by Ramanand Sagar, who also became a producer-director subsequently, seeks to explore various dimensions of love as understood in those days. Its love scenes heralded a new dimension in the depiction of romance and passion in Hindi cinema, and the film's aura of romance was greatly enhanced by Shankar Jaikishen as music directors and Shailendra and Hasrat Jaipuri as lyricists.

Raj Kapoor captured one of the moments when he embraces Nargis and transformed it into the logo of R.K. Films, ensuring that the embrace lasts beyond his lifetime! In both *Aag* and *Andaz*, Nargis was projected as a modern girl in an era when heroines were very traditional. It was not meant to be revolutionary; it was a natural casting because Nargis was like that. She was one of the few heroines who had been educated in a convent. She was a college-going girl and if films hadn't grabbed her, she would have been in college. Nargis embodied her generation.

Sensing the fascination that Raj Kapoor and Nargis had for each other, Jaddan Bai, Nargis's mother, refused to permit her daughter to go to Kashmir to shoot *Barsaat*. Eventually, Raj Kapoor had to compromise and shoot all the important scenes in Mahabaleshwar. In *Barsaat*, as in *Aag*, the theme was youth and love. Its famous love scene is regarded as one of the most romantic in modern Indian cinema. The intensity of the passion portrayed borders almost on violent, but it does not offend, nor is it jarring, because it is sincere in its vision of love as something sacred.

Awara (1951)

Awara came at a time when films were of a totally different nature. We still had remnants of British imperial dominance and we wanted a new social order. I tried to create a balance between entertainment and what I had to say to the people. *Awara* had everything. It had the theme of class distinction. It had the greatest juvenile romantic story wrapped in the poverty that the post-Independence era had inherited. It bloomed like a lotus in the mud and it went to people as something they had never seen before. Could this ever happen to a young man in such circumstances? With a song on his lips and a flower in his hand he went through all the ordeals that socio-economic disruptions could bring about. The change that the people wanted, they saw in the spirit of the young man who was the vagabond, the 'awara'. *Awara* celebrates the innocence of the Republic, newly born, learning to cope with the difficult world.

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Raj Kapoor made his most fateful decision, the one which outlined the design that destiny had woven for him, when he bought the script of *Awara* from K.A. Abbas, who had initially offered it to the legendary film-maker Mehboob Khan. Khan had heard the script but kept his decision in abeyance. When the writers, Abbas and V.P. Sathe, read the script out to Raj Kapoor, he listened quietly and at the end of the narration exclaimed, 'Done, this script is mine!'

The crux of the project, of course, was its casting. It was the classic confrontation of father and son, and the only casting that made sense, in terms of showmanship, was Prithviraj and Raj Kapoor. It was difficult to get the thespian of the Indian film industry, Prithviraj Kapoor, to agree. He resisted accepting the role at first, saying, Prithviraj does not play the role of the hero's father. Abbas promptly retorted, 'No, you are not playing the hero's father. It is Raj Kapoor who is playing the hero's son!' The filming of *Awara* was thus started.

By now Papa had assembled a trusted team of collaborators, among them the Marxist novelist, political columnist and neorealist scriptwriter Khwaja Ahmad Abbas and Shailendra, a poet and author of many of Kapoor's most famous songs. *Awara* spoke of the relevant issues of the day, mass unemployment following Independence, as well as corruption in the criminal justice system. With the message of socialism laced with taut drama, soulful music and stellar performances this film acquired cult status.

As in many of Raj Kapoor's films, the faults of the poor spring from the wrongs of the rich. In one exchange, Kapoor's character describes the miracle of modern society: 'Capitalists, black marketers, profiteers and moneylenders, who are they? All thieves like me.' In a courtroom scene in the film, the hero makes a powerful plea when he tells the judge, 'I am a killer, punish me for that. But I was not born a criminal. I too wanted to study and grow up to be an advocate or a judge, but an open sewer passed by the neighbourhood where I grew up from where crime germinated. Forget me anyhow but protect your children from getting infected by these germs of crime.' The period was captured both in terms of the optimism of post-Independent India and the aspiration of its people and also in all its bleakness and horror at the corruption that was spreading like a stain on the fabric of the society.

It is with this film that Raj Kapoor acquired his Chaplinesque tramp image, trying to survive the city and its harsh realities, which stayed with him in several films made later. Prithviraj Kapoor and K.N. Singh also delivered masterly performances. From the 1930s to the 1950s, films gradually evolved both in form and content and grew in sophistication. The dream sequence used for the first

time in Raj Kapoor's film *Awara* (1951) became a symbol of hope for the common man in the new, independent India. Its song '*Mujhko chahiye bahaar*' (I crave for spring and happiness) emphasizes the desires of ordinary people as represented by Raju (Raj Kapoor). Social environment, rather than nature, is portrayed as wielding greater influence on an individual's growth. This theme struck a chord with the poor masses everywhere. *Awara*, the film, opened up a great avenue for Indian movies behind the iron curtain.

In Russia, it nearly acquired the status of a national film. Nargis and Raj Kapoor were given a tumultuous welcome in that country, their popularity rivalling Jawaharlal Nehru's. Once, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas asked Nikita Khrushchev the reason for *Awara*'s extraordinary popularity in his country. Khrushchev was of the view that Russia had borne the full brunt of the World War and had suffered the maximum casualties. While many Russian film-makers made great films on the war, they all reminded the audiences of their loss. While the happy-go-lucky Raj Kapoor of *Awara* sang '*Zakhmon se bhara seena hai mera, hasti hain magar yeh mast nazar*' (My heart may be full of grief but my outlook remains sunny). This, said Khrushchev, gave his people hope and it helped them forget their sorrows. Khwaja Ahmad Abbas mentioned this episode in his autobiography, *I Am Not An Island*.

Aah (1953)

I will not forget my failures. I did not have to wait until the premiere of *Aah,* at its third screening, to know its fate. I was in the darkened auditorium at the very first show at the Opera House in Bombay, listening to what the atmosphere had to tell me. It told me again and again, 'Your picture is a flop.' Years of experience in film-making enable you to understand that living, palpitating atmosphere of the auditorium during the first show. It conveys the reaction of the audience. *Aah* flopped. After that came *Boot Polish,* and I was holding my breath again. It ran. Then *Jagte Raho* came to the screen and that living, palpitating thing in the darkened auditorium began to nag me again. What it told me this time I just could not accept. Therefore, the Grand Prix which *Jagte Raho* won at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival is doubly unforgettable.

***Boot Polish* (1954)**

The young of this country have everything in them. They are honest, educated, they can be beautiful, wonderful citizens of the country if given the opportunities. But certain influences have always bogged them down, and they have been trapped in a situation where they are helpless. Being beaten down by social influences, by a shortage of economic resources, they still carry a flower in their hand and move towards a different horizon. A day will come when the young will reach their goal.

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In *Boot Polish*, the influence of the Italian neo-realists is palpable. A film about orphaned children, a wicked aunt and a smuggler with a heart of gold, *Boot Polish* is a sentimental tale and a complete departure from his hallmark romances. In one scene, a brother and sister are begging on a train, pretending to be disabled, when something makes the boy forget that he is supposed to be blind. 'Isn't that shabby man dozing in a corner, like any other commuter, the legendary Raj Kapoor?' His younger sister scoffs. 'Everyone looks like Raj Kapoor these days,' she says.

Raj Kapoor was a compulsive seducer, a scene-stealer as an actor and effective as a director, persuading cast and crew to do his bidding. But as the cameo in *Boot Polish* hints, he was keenly aware of the distance between his celebrated Everyman persona and his actual, everyday self.

Boot Polish, as we know it, is a wonderful illustration of Raj Kapoor's uncanny music sense. It is a testimony to his belief that music often makes all the difference when it comes to the box office. The seventy-minute film had been directed by Raj Kapoor's assistant, Prakash Arora, and had no songs in it. Raj Kapoor saw the film and wondered: how will it run? He then decided to make his own contribution to the movie and incorporated songs into the story, including such everlasting numbers as '*Nanhe munhe bachche teri mutthi main kya hai*' and thus ensured that Prakash Arora's film became a success.

Raj Kapoor had a keen eye for the tiny deprivations that dash the spirits of the unprivileged. In another moment from *Boot Polish*, the camera pans down a line of people waiting for rations. It's a glimpse of our country's have-nots, united in need. Suddenly, it starts raining and the have-nots divide again. There are those who pull out umbrellas and those who get drenched. The humiliation of the poorest makes you cringe but this being a Raj Kapoor film, it also makes you laugh, and soon enough there is a merry song. Raj Kapoor's work was an ideology, if one can call it that, of emotionalism and entertainment; he sugared his social concerns with humour and music and melodrama. The solutions he posited to a collective, post-Independence let-down had little to do with politics, and a lot to do with love. As much as that tendency would frustrate his more political collaborators, it would introduce Indian cinema to the world and lay the groundwork for Bollywood, India's greatest cultural ambassador.

Shree 420 (1955)

Shree 420 features the return of the Chaplin-type character, contrasting the cloistered world of the rich with the open spaces, or open heart, of the poor. It was a variation of the same theme as the film *Awara*. Cinematic social realism, best represented by the eventual triumph of the underdog, endears him to the masses. His films evoke a return to simplicity. The title is drawn from Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code, under which, cheats and frauds are prosecuted. In fact, the city as an evil environment was a theme that gathered prominence in the 1950s. *Shree 420* was an even sharper critique of upper-class corruption, and

conveyed a deep appreciation of the difficulty of behaving ethically in a world intricately rigged against the poor, even for honest souls with college degrees, like its protagonist.

A sequence succinctly sums up the theme using caustic dialogues penned by Khwaja Ahmad Abbas. Raju (Raj Kapoor) is an orphan from Allahabad, who has just arrived in Bombay with many dreams in his eyes. He is honest and hard-working. He declares this to a street side beggar, who becomes his instant friend, guide and philosopher as far as survival in Bombay is concerned. On that bustling street, the lame beggar is the only one who has time for a stranger. On listening to Raju's intention of leading an honest life in Bombay by working hard, he declares that since Raju is educated, hardworking and young, he should beg on the street: '*Tum padhe likhe ho, mehnati ho, jawan ho, to tumhe Bambai mein bheekh mangni chahiye*.'

In *Shree 420*, Raj (Raj Kapoor) is torn between Vidya (translated as knowledge), and Maya (meaning illusion, embodied by Nadira) as he is drawn into

a vortex of crime. In the end, he realizes that honest living is important. Raj Kapoor's films are classics because while they continue to entertain, beneath the romantic gloss, his films have class conflict as a subtext. Raj Kapoor beat the competition at the box office by the positive simplicity of his narrative. The characters in *Shree 420* are innocent and forgiving. Their cultural values are not challenged by their reduced circumstances. Singing, laughing and celebrating their feelings with songs such as '*Dil ka haal sune dilwala*' and '*Ramaiya vastavaiya*' and no malice whatsoever!

As the plots unfold one after another, they engage us in the contrasting details of an uneasy wealthy class and the trusting, joyful poor. The movie delivers Raj Kapoor's message in his usual romantic style: that values are rooted in human emotions and not in pragmatic naturalism. He was convinced that love and compassion were all that was needed. Papa did not need to plot physical violence. This, I feel, is the most pervasive feature of all of Raj Kapoor films. The spirit and moral fibre of his subjects always prevailed over the narrative, characters, plots and events. There is a certain consistency in the themes of all his movies from *Aag* to *Henna*.

Jagte Raho (1956)

Everybody was enthused by the post-Independence spirit, which our political leaders had generated, to create the India of their dreams. They had fought for freedom but then they had to 'achieve' it. And that is how I gradually drifted towards socially committed cinema and came out with films like *Awara*, *Boot Polish*, *Shree 420* and *Jagte Raho*. We wanted a reformed social order, a certain kind of discipline, education to eradicate poverty, and so on. I saw the environment and the effect it had on people and tried to present it with romanticism and a certain sensitivity of belonging, of humanism and in totality it worked out as love.

This Hindi-Bengali bilingual was called *Ek Din Raatre* in its Bengali version. A neorealist venture from R.K. Films, this film defied conventions to make a statement on social inequality, in an interesting and engrossing tale of one night when a poor peasant comes to town in search of water.

The Chaplinesque tramp in Raj Kapoor continued to fascinate the critics. *Jagte Raho* is another satire on the corrupt city life as seen through the eyes of a simple peasant (Raj Kapoor) during the course of one night. In search of a glass of water and on the run from the law for no fault of his, he gets exposed to the various criminal activities going on in practically every other household of a residential block of flats where he finds himself. He is intimidated, harassed to the point that he cannot take it any more and says so with a raised stick in his hand towards the end of the film. In the rather long film, the normally dialogue-loving Raj Kapoor did not speak a single word until the very end. The block of flats is a metaphor for society as a whole wherein the only innocent and honest characters are the children and the housewives. His outburst is a condemnation of such a society.

It was his deep insight and artistic acumen that brought Raj Kapoor to the theme of *Jagte Raho*. Raj Kapoor was the first Indian producer to win the coveted Grand Prix award at an international festival. The event took place at Karlovy Vary where Raj Kapoor received a standing ovation. The box-office failure of *Jagte Raho* in 1956 was a big setback for Raj Kapoor. 'One flop is capable of undoing the good done by two hits,' he had said. When he was told some years later that the film was a success in the rerun, Raj Kapoor asked, 'And who saw it?' He sighed, 'A film-maker should not have to wait ten to twelve years to see profits and the acceptability of his creation.' *Jagte Raho* marked the end of Nargis's association with Raj Kapoor.

Ab Dilli Door Nahin (1957)

When he met Raj Kapoor once, Jawaharlal Nehru bemoaned the absence of films for children and promised to give some precious personal time for shooting, if such a film were to be made. In response, Raj Kapoor started shooting *Ab Dilli Door Nahin*, a film about a young boy from a village who begins a march to Delhi to seek justice for his father who has been unfairly arrested. He has no money, no means except for the conviction that Chacha Nehru will help him get justice. During his long journey, he meets many generous people and in the end the child succeeds in meeting Nehru.

Jis Desh Main Ganga Behti Hai (1960)

It was the post-Independence era. There were a lot of factors that influenced young minds, and they influenced me. Panditji (Nehru) said that he wanted every Indian in this country to do something for the nation, to build it up into the beautiful dream that he had. He was a visionary and I tried to follow him, to do my best, whatever I could, through films.

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Jis Desh Main Ganga Behti Hai deals with the surrender of outlaws and their return to the nationalist, mainstream fold. Coincidentally, at the time when Raj Kapoor was filming the last segment of *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai* in Ooty, dacoits in Chambal, motivated by Gandhi's head disciple Vinoba Bhave, were surrendering to the government in Madhya Pradesh. There's a lovely scene in the film where an old retired dacoit, played by Nana Palsikar, is lying on a charpoy and joking with the wives and sisters of his colleagues. Watching him, one young dacoit says, 'We've seen the kings rule, the Mughals rule, the British rule, when will the time come for dacoits to rule?' At which the old man ripostes, 'Foolish man, kings and Mughals and British come and go but we dacoits always reign.'

Sangam (1964)

I returned to Bombay after four months in London, only four days before *Sangam* was to be released, first in Delhi. It was a strange moment, to be poised between struggle and the fruition of that struggle. There was apprehension and reassurance. Apprehension, because that is what every film-maker feels on the eve of a release. Reassurance, because I had just finished speaking long distance with my Delhi distributor, who told me that the sales for Friday and Saturday alone at the advance booking windows were an unprecedented record. Now, sitting all by myself in the cottage, I try to put down on paper something of the kind of impact that *Sangam* is expected to have at home and the impact it has already had abroad, among the many westerners who saw it. I have lying before me a letter from Mr Stephen Dalby, Director of Sound at Twickenham Film Studios, which I would like to quote here, for it provides an apt starting point to analyse the impact of *Sangam* on the Western mind.

> 'Dear Mr Raj Kapoor,
>
> Now that the work on your picture *Sangam* is finished, I would like to say how much I enjoyed working with you and how interested I have been in the picture. I have been very impressed by the technical quality of the film and particularly the sound recording by Mr Allauddin Khan. The small amount of post synchronization required in this film is remarkable. Sound effects are used with great dramatic effect in the film and make a strong contribution to the

story. The quality of music recording and the composition of the score is very fine.

With kindest regards and best wishes for the success of the picture.'

The letter is a fair sample of the impression the R.K. unit, our technicians, created in London, both at Twickenham Film Studios as well as Technicolor Limited. As technical men, they were struck by the quality of the work done by Radhu Karmakar, Allauddin and M.R. Achrekar, whose achievement, they said, was of international calibre. They were impressed by the high technical gloss of *Sangam*. As Mr George Gunn of Technicolor said, 'What tremendous production values your film has, Mr Kapoor!' It would be wrong to say we were not touched by this; coming from some of the top cine technicians of the world, it is praise indeed. But it is not this alone that I want to write about here. It is the film itself, the thematic content and its directorial pinpointing which made such an impact on the Western layman. We had a sample preview of the finished product in the post-synchronization theatre at Twickenham after the 'answer print' was ready. It was an impromptu preview, held at a day's notice. Yet the theatre was jam-packed. There was no place to sit and an English couple who came late went up to the projection booth and saw the entire film from the cubicle there. After the show, there was a general discussion. One person asked me, 'Why did you shoot so much of this film in a European locale, Mr Kapoor?' Why? Because, in the first place, it was a fresh locale. In the second, there are so many Indians living abroad today, in England as well as in Germany, France, Italy and other places. They carry with them the culture of India and merge it in the wider context of western living. It is significant that in this film I wanted to achieve a similar merging. It is not for nothing that this film is titled Sangam.

Raj Kapoor with Rajendra Kumar and Vyjayanthimala in Sangam

It could have been 'Gharonda', the title under which the original script was written. It could have been 'We Three' and so on. But that is not the point. *Sangam* is not a mere love story, it is the propagation of an essentially Indian concept—the fusion of souls like the fusion of the sacred rivers Ganga and Yamuna in which the third, the mythical Saraswati, merges at the triveni or place of confluence. Take the story, for instance. How would the West have treated it? If Gopal, the man who loves Radha and is loved by her, were a westerner he would have blindly claimed her for his own. There would have been no conflict of the kind that *Sangam* portrays, for Western values are different. If they were westerners, their (Gopal and Radha's) love would probably have been consummated. But here the love is essentially spiritual, and in sacrifice it is sublimated into a divine emotion, which is so basic to Indian values. That is why on the eve of the release of *Sangam*, I was at pains to stress one thing—*Sangam* is not a bonanza. Not even a bonanza with a message. When you penetrate the gloss, when secondary vibrations set off by viewing this film settle within you, you will find that *Sangam* is essentially a very serious and a very Indian film. It is this thing of the triveni, the trinity, which is interpreted in terms of three human beings.

Take, for example, the lines of the song '*Prem patra*': '*Tujhe Ganga main samjhunga* ...

tujhe Jamuna main samjhunga … tu dil ke paas hai itni … tujhe apna mein samjhunga … agar mar jaaon rooh bhatkegi … tere intezar mein … intezar mein … intezar mein (I accept you as the holy river Ganga … I accept you as the holy river Yamuna … you are so close to the heart … I will think of you as my own … if I die, my spirit will wander for you … waiting for you … waiting for you ... waiting for you).' Since we are interpreting the theme in terms of human beings and emotions, it is obviously addressed to the beloved, but then, as with Omar Khayyam, as with the Sufis and the poet Hafiz, the beloved is another name for God. And this verse attains that divinity at the end when the ashes of the lover are immersed at the confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna and the Saraswati, at the triveni sangam. Or take the burlesque song sequence in Paris. This again illustrates the Indianness of *Sangam*. This sequence, which, incidentally, the westerners who saw this film enjoyed immensely, illustrates what is embodied in our shastras—a woman, in her different aspects as wife, mother, beloved, courtesan, friend. Here, the husband wants to visit a Paris nightclub. The wife insists on coming along. He refuses, saying it is not a place for respectable women! She is sarcastic, asks whether it is a place for respectable men. But he insists that it is the job of these women to entertain men. She replies—and this is the key point—'Is it not also the job of the wife to entertain her husband? Those women who do not do so lose their husbands!'

I have striven in *Sangam* for a synthesis of the East and the West in such a way that, while being appreciated and understood by Indian audiences, it can simultaneously prove thought-provoking to Western minds. This reminds me of what three charming young ladies had to say after seeing *Sangam* in London, about a point which would not normally strike the Western cine goer. It concerned the emotion graph of the gun. When the husband learns that he is an impediment to true love, he first wants to get out of the way. He takes the gun in his hand. But for the wife, marital ties are more sacred than the memory of her first love. She wants her husband to live, so the gun goes into her hand. And finally, when the lover learns that as long as he lives unhappiness will prevail, he takes

the gun. A typically Indian emotion graph, and one that I did not think many would have observed. Yes, it pleases me that so many different people who have seen *Sangam* have been excited in so many ways about it.

I wanted a certain star actress I was working with in a film to play a role in *Sangam*. I sent her a telegram asking her to decide whether she could afford to—rather, if she wanted to—play a role in my film. She was working in Madras, so I sent the cable there, saying: '*Bol Radha bol, sangam hoga ki nahin* (Tell me, Radha, will we meet as the two rivers, the Ganga and the Yamuna, do)?' For some days, there was no reply, but when it came, it said, '*Hoga … hoga … hoga* (We will … we will … we will…)!' It came at a time when my lyricist Shailendra was sitting with me, and that is how he wrote the popular song '*Bol Radha bol, sangam hoga ki nahin*' in which the heroine sang back, '*Hoga … hoga … hoga*'.

Mera Naam Joker (1970)

'Has anybody seen my heart?' This scene from *Mera Naam Joker* at the very beginning of the film, affects me deeply. The performer, the joker, has invited all his past attachments, all those he has been emotionally involved with. He is giving his last performance because he has a premonition that he is going to die.

I feel that we (artists) are probably the fortunate few in this world who have had the boon of people looking into our hearts, of having loved them, and receiving love in return. This affects me tremendously.

Simi with Rishi Kapoor in Mera Naam Joker

How different everything becomes as the perspective changes! Years ago, when *Mera Naam Joker* was only a monumental 'literary scenario' written by K.A. Abbas, I used to browse through it and I was almost frightened at the prospect of filming it! The whole canvas of it was so vast and compelling, the panorama of the world of entertainment and entertainers, that it took me some time to absorb it.

One favourite method of mine of 'tuning in' is to get the reactions of close associates, and even strangers, to any theme I am about to tackle. So, I began by reading out chapters of 'Joker' to people who would come and see me. I was fascinated by the central character of the joker and wanted to see how people would react to him. The reaction was instantaneous and positive in every case.

The character of the joker is the character of 'the little man'—as embodied by me in films such as *Awara*, *Shree 420* and *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai*—but rounded out and complete with spiritual dimensions. For years I have had the images of all of mankind's gods and spiritual leaders on the walls of my cottage, and to them I bow my head in prayer every night. There's Buddha, Christ and Zoroaster and India's great spiritual leader, Gandhi. The character of the joker embodies all that is spiritual and selfless; it embodies all the teachings of the world's great spiritual leaders who led lives of suffering themselves to make mankind happy. From his childhood to his death, the joker moves from one phase of his life to the next. The different women he loves, all leave the scars of separation and unfulfilled love on his heart. But there is always a smile on his lips. Concealing his tears, he goes about his mission in life to make people happy, to spread laughter and joy in the lives and hearts of young and old alike.

Padmini and Raj Kapoor in Mera Naam Joker

They say, 'Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone'. They also say, 'Many loves make a life'. This is the philosophy of the film. There is as much depth in the film as there is glamour and spectacle, pomp and showmanship. Ever since I was a young lad, I have been fascinated by the life of entertainers, little realizing that one day I would be joining their ranks. During my schooldays, I was always short of pocket money, because what little I got, I would spend on toffees and treats! But when the circus came to town, I'd be there to see it—even if I had to crawl under the canvas into the arena! And then the movies! I never missed one of them, even if I had to beg, borrow or steal the price of the admission. So, this film just had to happen.

When people ask me why I made *Mera Naam Joker* and how I thought I could contain such mighty dimensions of a saga-like script within the framework of a motion picture, I smile to myself and remember my schooldays—the innumerable clowns I had laughed at and with, old friends like Charlie Chaplin, the Marx Brothers, Buster Keaton, Joe E. Brown, Laurel and Hardy, and many more, the circuses I had watched, the trapeze girls and the funny performing animals. And through all this laughter, I remember the single tear under the clown's eye. The soul of the universe is contained in a laugh and a tear and I have been stirred by both in an intense and fully lived life.

I don't like to talk about my work except to those who understand what I am trying to do. In twenty years of film-making I have made ten films which embody more than just an inkling of the philosophy of Raj Kapoor. All that work led surely and inevitably to the making of *Mera Naam Joker*, which is a saga of life as seen through the eyes of the entertainers. It is a saga of life as it is lived in the spotlight, as we film people live it. And on the flip side, it is also a saga of life as it is beyond the spotlight—again, as we film people experience it. It is a spiritual odyssey of the soul of man; of his aspirations and his essential loveliness; of his joys and sorrows; of his loves and frustrations; of the smile painted with grease paint on his face and the painful grimace concealed within it…

To make such an immense film, to be able to put on screen all that imagination can conceive and conjure, is no easy task, and the making of *Mera Naam Joker* was fraught with gigantic problems. All these problems could be and were tackled on a larger-than-life scale. Gorgeous sets were conceived and erected with no consideration to cost. Amazing visual effects of 'forced perspective' and optical illusions were imagined and then we went ahead and converted all our fantasies into reality! It was hard work all the way and it took its toll. There was an obsession to outdo everything we had done before and outdo everything that had ever been done on the Indian screen, a challenge that the script of *Mera Naam Joker* set us. We could not but face up to the challenge. A lot of work had already been done, but the biggest challenge was the circus sequence.

One of the seven heroines of the film was a beautiful young heroine from the Russian motion picture industry. This girl played the trapeze artist who the joker falls in love with. She came to India for the shooting along with members of the Soviet State Circus. A huge circus arena was specially erected on location, probably the most elaborate, gigantic piece of location work ever done for any Indian film.

My work is my religion. My obsession. I stand or fall by the yardstick of my creative work. That is why I find questions concerning length, footage, and how many parts and so on totally irrelevant where *Mera Naam Joker* is concerned. Yes, there will be two films, *Mera Naam Joker Part I* and *Mera Naam Joker Part II*. Yes, both parts will be long. Is not human life long? And engrossing? And with never a dull moment?'

The soul of the clown was never understood. Things like the death of the clown's mother, when he still must perform—he cannot cry, because nobody can see tears in a clown's eyes, so he makes an act of it, and when his trolley is stolen, he pumps out tears from his eyes like a fountain—now that was probably too heavy for the audience. There's a saying in Punjabi, '*Ma javandi sat par karm na dendi vand* (A mother can give birth to seven children, but she cannot give them their destiny).' *Mera Naam Joker* is very close to my heart because just as a child who is either sick or challenged is close to his parents, a dear film, which is unfortunately a failure, is closer to the heart. I feel the same way for *Jagte Raho*. These beautiful films—either there was something wrong with them or they were such fantastic films that people did not understand.

Kal Aaj Aur Kal (1971)

If Randhir has not had the privilege of working under my direction, at least I have been more fortunate, since I have had the opportunity of being directed by him in two films, *Kal Aaj Aur Kal* and *Dharam Karam*. In his first film, *Kal Aaj Aur Kal*, Daboo was a competent craftsman. The film may not have run, but then, neither did my first film, *Aag*. *Kal Aaj Aur Kal* is a film I am as proud of as I am of the films that I have directed myself. Daboo has freshness and youthful exuberance and an individuality which is evident in this film, which in many ways is so different from all my films. Working with both father and

son in the same film was a rare privilege. What is more, my would-be daughter-in-law, Babita, also appeared as my son's beloved in the film; it lends an even greater authenticity to the story. It was a great pleasure for me both as a producer and an artist to work in the film which projects a whole new image of mine, in conformity with the changing times.

Bobby (1973)

Mera Naam Joker flopped. All the people who had worked with me and been by my side, and who had earned millions and millions of rupees from my films, turned their backs on me. R.K. Studio, my house, my wife's jewellery, everything that I could see was mortgaged. I thought I was finished. Then I looked up and saw that famous R.K. banner and realized that everything is mortgaged but for the name Raj Kapoor and as long as the banner is there, Raj Kapoor will be there. And I am sure that banner will always be there, shining as it shines today. When I launched *Bobby*, it was to regain my reputation as a film-maker. As I have always believed in juvenile romanticism and adolescent love, I could identify with *Bobby* just as much as, later, millions of people did. I was confident. But when I decided that my son Rishi Kapoor would fit the role, I first asked him if he would care to work with a flop film-maker and an extremely demanding director like me!

To be honest, I am not a well-read man. I feel that being groomed in awareness by life itself is very necessary. I came across a sentence in an Archie comic, spoken by Archie himself, something like, 'Seventeen is no longer young; we have a life of our own too and we are aware of it!' This really got me. I felt, here is something very profound. Today's children are not as they were twenty years ago. They are much more aware of their environment, of themselves. They are much more responsible than we were twenty, thirty or forty years ago. Our forefathers were grown-ups, married and with children, and yet they were told: 'Shut up, you are a kid!' You can't say this to a child any more. Thinking about this resulted in my making *Bobby*.

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Raj Kapoor reversed his fortunes after the debacle of *Mera Naam Joker* with this youthful, breezy entertainer marking the blazing debut of his son Rishi Kapoor with the talented Dimple Kapadia. Laxmikant-Pyarelal were brought in to create popular songs, with '*Jhoot bole kauwa kaate*' topping the charts, as the film emerged as the biggest hit of 1973. It was considered quite 'bold' not just for a sexy Dimple Kapadia in a red swimming costume staring from the billboards, but also for its lyrics. Anand Bakshi's '*Hum tum ek kamre mein band hon*' was way out there and suggestive compared to the imaginative poetry of Shailendra and Hasrat Jaipuri usually associated with R.K. Films.

Dharam Karam (1975)

Dharam Karam is diametrically opposite in theme to the liberal, socialist, democratic *Awara*. In *Awara*, the son of the judge becomes a thief because of the social and economic environment he is brought up in, but in *Dharam Karam*, the son of a music composer is brought up by a criminal in a hutment area, but his musical genes surface despite the difficulties while the villain is brought up by the composer who fails to instil a sense of melody in him. Thus, *Dharam Karam* is feudal and decadent in spirit. Randhir Kapoor, Raj Kapoor's son who directed this film, established that genes play a far greater role in shaping an individual than the environment in which he or she grows up.

Dharam Karam is the story of Shankar (Prem Nath) who is a hoodlum and is known as 'Shankar dada'. He is not happy with his life and he wants his offspring to become a law-abiding, decent and honourable individual. He believes that it's possible only by nurturing him in a suitable environment and not the home and milieu he is in. Hence, when his wife gives birth to a baby boy, he switches him with another child born at the same, the child of a renowned artist Ashok (Raj Kapoor). Now Shankar's son Ranjeet (Narendra Nath) grows up in Ashok's home and Ashok's son Dharam (Randhir Kapoor) grows up in a slum. In keeping with the vision of the scriptwriter, Prayag Raj, and the director, Randhir Kapoor, genes prove to be stronger than fostering and environment. Therefore, despite growing up in a bad environment, Dharam does not become a bad person and despite growing up in a favourable environment Ranjeet goes down the wrong path.

Satyam Shivam Sundaram (1978)

I was inspired to make *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* by Lata Mangeshkar's voice. Way back in the 1950s she used to sit and delight us with her music until the wee hours of the morning. I would close my eyes and go into a trance. No wonder God doesn't endow a woman with both a heavenly voice and exceptional beauty. She could wreck the world! I wanted to make a film about an ordinary-looking girl with a beautiful voice who ensnares a young, handsome man. I had asked Lata-ji to act in it. She agreed but later she backed

out.

In *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*, I was projecting the philosophy that it is love and faith which sanctify a relationship and that beauty is only skin deep. If you remember, the film begins with the shot of a stone by the side of a road. Then you see people decorating the stone with flowers and Kumkum and praying to it. It then becomes their God. What turns a stone into a God? Our love, belief and worship. The message was not understood by all and the film flopped.

Today's children perhaps may not believe it, but a miracle happened once. This river (the river near his farm in Loni) has helped me a lot. I was shooting the climax of the film, when the whole village was flooded. The whole farm got flooded as well. You could just see water everywhere. Luckily my people were there with a camera and they filmed whatever they could. I had my sets erected here, the temple and all. And those were the very sets which were supposed to be flooded. That was lucky. So this river has been very lucky for me.

We are shocked by nudity. We must grow up. In a country that has produced seven hundred million children, people are shocked by partial nudity! Why are we so hypocritical? Children don't grow on trees. They are made in bed. And what is immoral in

showing a beautiful girl? Take cinema to the villages, give them entertainment. The only entertainment they have now is brewing alcohol, drinking it and producing children. When the film (*Satyam Shivam Sundaram*) was complete, I asked the Censor Board, 'Which is more harmful, this or what you are permitting? You see the banners and posters all over India. Everybody is holding a gun or a sword or something with which to kill, in a country that propagates non-violence! Can't you understand that that is what is harmful?'

I respect women and I cannot understand why I am accused of exploiting them. If a Fellini shows a woman in the nude, it is considered 'art'. If I show off a woman's beauty, it's called exploitation! What influenced my work of the early 1950s is not necessarily what will influence the work of the 1980s. It is not that idealism has been lost. I have taken up themes in which women are perhaps more active than men or are more subjected to emotional tyranny by society.

Biwi O Biwi (1981)

Chandra's (Randhir Kapoor) mission in life is to get married but the ominous influence of Mars in his horoscope makes this task a difficult one. Through his friend Gafoor (Deven Verma), Chandra gets a job in a theatre where his performance attracts the attention of Asha (Poonam Dhillon), who promptly falls in love with him. But the obstacle in this path of true love is Asha's father Colonel Mangal Singh (Sanjeev Kumar), a retired army officer, who will never allow his daughter to marry a civilian and has plans for Asha to marry his friend Colonel Hari's son, a captain. So he goes to Kashmir to fix the alliance with the captain, but not before Asha apprises him of her predicament. A sympathetic captain agrees to refuse to marry Asha and lets Chandra masquerade as him. What follows is a rip-roaring comedy full of mistaken identities, impersonations and delightful subterfuges. The film was produced by Raj Kapoor and directed by Rahul Rawail who was, because of his hard work and common sense, Raj Kapoor's favourite assistant director. The script was narrated to Papa and he loved the inherent comic possibilities in the theme. Sanjeev Kumar's performance in a double role was the highlight of the film.

Prem Rog (1982)

Prem Rog was my return to purposeful films, and I enjoyed making it much more because I had a strong and definite comment to make. We Indians are hypocrites. On the one hand, we eulogize womankind as being noble and great, the embodiment of motherhood. When we want to give our nation the highest respect, we address it as 'Bharat Mata'. But in practice we give our women the worst possible treatment. The women in this country are degraded and humiliated. They are burnt alive. Even pet animals get better treatment in many homes. In no other country does one hear of so many cases of rape and bride burning. The birth of a girl is considered a curse in our families. Why is it so? To me, womankind symbolizes love, affection and warmth. Women deserve to be respected and

put on a pedestal. They have as much right to happiness as any man. My film is a fight for their right to happiness.

Every story has a character, a personality and destiny, and must be moulded accordingly. My previous pictures were hero-oriented, whereas not only was *Prem Rog* a heroine-oriented film, it also had a woman as the main character, hence the presentation had to be different. I wanted to unmask the double standards of those who lay down social norms. I'm talking about the rituals, customs and traditions which have no relevance to our life now. We live in a feudal system and call ourselves social. In the name of tradition, we inflict pain and sorrow. Even today in villages and small towns where the rich and feudal thakurs rule the roost, a widow is subjected to such ostracism that life is a living hell for her. The same society permits a widower to marry a young girl just months after his wife's death. In the name of tradition and khandaan, young girls are conditioned to accept the lives of outcasts. I wanted to expose the deep-rooted chauvinism of our feudal men who think that they can do what they want while their women must tread the straight and narrow. I am not propagating a permissive society. I only want to expose the duality in the lives of those who call themselves the thekedars of society. It is a pity that in this age of science we have to tackle subjects like this, but it is still a gory reality in our society like rape and dowry deaths.

In *Prem Rog* I protested the plight of a widow and tried to decorate and ornament the message with the usual box-office embellishments because I wanted a lot of people to see it. The greater the number of people who see it, more will be the awakening of public opinion.

Ram Teri Ganga Maili (1985)

We had gone to Calcutta to picturize portions of a song in *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai*. I was at Swami Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's matth at the famous Dakshineshwar Temple on the banks of the river Hooghly. There, a sadhu narrated to me a most fascinating incident, which became the seed for what was to become *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* twenty-five years later. The incident goes something like this: One day, the famous nanga sadhu of Rishikesh, Totapuri Maharaj, had come to the banks of the Hooghly to meet Sri Ramakrishna and test his spiritual accomplishments. They met at a point where the Hooghly, a tributary of the Ganga, is at its filthiest and Totapuri Maharaj said: '*Ram, yeh teri Ganga kitni maili hai* (Ram, how dirty this Ganga of yours is).' Looking at him steadily, Sri Ramakrishna replied: 'Maharaj, this is only natural. As she flows down from Rishikesh to here, she does nothing but wash away the sins of human beings.' This incident remained in my mind and eventually led me to make *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*.

Ganga the pure, Ganga the virgin, Ganga the Himalayan beauty, Ganga the faithful. The word Ganga has so many meanings that any girl who had to portray her had to be somebody who had never been seen before and could not be identified with anything else. And that is how I got this new girl Mandakini, who looked like Ganga and who became Ganga. Although there was tremendous criticism of the so-called nudity, of the scantily dressed Ganga, it was the faith in the purity of the Ganga (the river), which sustained the faith in the innocence of Ganga (the character in the film). That is what held on and, despite all the criticism, the Ganga still flows.

Henna (1991)

At the moment, I am working on a script that I would have done some fourteen years back, called *Henna*. The inspiration for the film came from a famous couplet: '*Kya akal aati hai basher to thokren khane ke baad, aur rang lati hai henna, pathar par pis jane ke baad* (A person learns from the trials and tribulations he goes through, the same way henna gives its colour after it has been crushed)'.

Henna is a story of human relationships, about two nations which were one, whose waters were one till it was poisoned. The story is built around a river, the Jhelum, that starts in India and flows into Pakistan. This part of the country is Hindu, but the moment you go to the other part, it becomes Muslim. Why? Because man has divided it. But can you divide love? This is the kind of film that I want to make. It is a beautiful document of human values, it deals with the shared values of all sensible people, no matter who they are, what caste, religion, country, language. They are God's people. They are kind people and they can love.

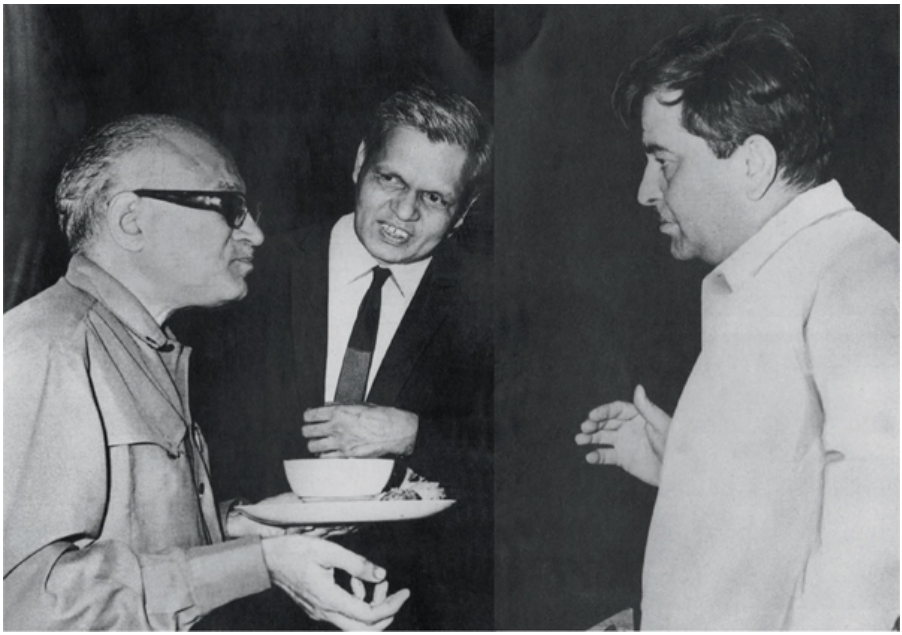
~

This is basically the theme of the film. R.K. Films completed production of *Henna* in 1990. Raj Kapoor's eldest son, Randhir, directed the film, his second son, Rishi, played the lead role, and his youngest son, Rajiv, helped in the production. The premiere of the film was inaugurated by the President of India as a tribute to the memory of the great showman, Raj Kapoor. The film was a blockbuster success.

Colleagues and Friends

'Only he attracts me who always craves for perfection with dedication.'—Raj Kapoor

Raj Kapoor with Hasrat Jaipuri, Jaikishen, Shankar and Shailendra



Raj Kapoor with Khwaja Ahmed Abbas (extreme left) and Vasant Sathe

The R.K. team – a happy family: Seen here are Geeta Dutt, Lata Mangeshkar, Manna Dey, Mahendra Kapoor, Mukesh, Jaikishen and Raj Kapoor at the recording of 'Hum bhi hai, tum bhi ho' *from the film* Jis Desh Main Ganga Behti Hai. *The song took almost forty-eight hours to record.*

From *Awara* onwards, and then Shree 420, the team of Raj Kapoor, K.A. Abbas and Vasant Sathe gave a new rhythm to popular cinema.

K.A. Abbas was responsible for the proletarian ethos of the early R.K. Films. As Abbas himself fondly recalls, theirs was a strange combination. Raj Kapoor was a deeply religious person; Abbas was an agnostic and a rationalist. Raj Kapoor was a vague progressive, mostly apolitical, while Abbas was a die-hard Marxist. Yet this association worked, because, as Abbas once put it, 'While Raj Kapoor is no great ideologue, he is not allergic to ideas. Indeed, with his basic sympathy for the common man, he is more than amenable to socially progressive ideas and humanist ideals, so long as their presentation does not interfere with the popularity potential of his film.'

Raj Kapoor on his professional associations

Fortunately, I have from the very start been happy in my professional associations and it was quite early in my film career, when I was scarcely a film and a half old, that my association with K.A. Abbas began. That was *Awara,* an exciting intellectual adventure, which set off an exchange of ideas and a way of working between Abbas saab and myself. *Awara* embodies my earliest fashioning of a sort of 'universal humanity' symbol which was to go on taking finer shape through a succession of films until *Mera Naam Joker*, where it emerged as the crystallization of my entire philosophy of life. The joker had been conceived as early as the post-*Awara* years and Abbas saab's marathon script was the result of years of visualization and labour. Still, many a year and many a film were to pass before I finally mustered up enough courage to actually get down to making it. Working with Abbas saab has always been a stimulating, intellectual experience and the long years of working together and thinking on similar wavelengths peaked in *Mera Naam Joker*. The joker symbolizes my entire philosophy of life, love and fulfilment.'

Written and visualized chapter-wise, the story moves through the various stages of the joker's life. At each stage, he meets a different woman, each stage culminating in its own peculiar disillusionments. Through this process of love and sorrow, the joker learns much, teaches much, until the twilight of his life brings the film to its most memorable climax, a climax which attains supreme Christian proportions.

That is why the making of this film is such a challenge to me. To meet this challenge I have had to first put in a lifetime of hard labour in films.

Raj Kapoor with Radhu Karmakar

I was influenced by Orson Welles's camerawork during *Barsaat*. *Aag* had very low-key lighting. The contrast between black and white was very vivid … I wanted my cameraman to give me black and grey pictures. But at that time nobody liked my low-key lighting. Those days, bright pictures were in vogue. The first question I put to Radhu Karmakar, when he came to see me (he had just done a film for Bombay Talkies called *Milan*), was, 'Can you show me the night scene of *Milan*?' I liked what I saw and he became my cameraman for *Awara*. I liked Radhu's contrast lighting. It was beneficial for the mood of my scene, especially the dramatic scenes. *Awara* is one of my best photographed films. It was revolutionary, and the credit goes to Radhu Karmakar.

I make films for the common man, so it is important to be amidst them, the common men and women. Here, in the common man's wayside restaurants, one gets an opportunity to meet a lot of people and witness life. People meet you with love and affection. They have no malice and ego in them. In these places, I get the same welcome I got when I was a child—the only difference being that in my childhood I used to eat on credit and now I pay cash!

Mehboob Khan

Raj Kapoor was the final torchbearer of a line of great producers and directors like Guru Dutt, Bimal Roy and Mehboob Khan. They bred not only popular hits, popular stars and profits, but genres of their own, at once typical and universal. Bimal Roy pioneered the depiction of everyday reality on the movie screen. Guru Dutt's forte was finesse, be it in crime thrillers or in autobiographical films of a disconsolate romantic. Mehboob Khan, with his film *Mother India*, ran the widest gamut of Indian emotions. But Raj Kapoor's contribution to Indian cinema was his own brand of simple social messages wrapped in intense passion.

Mehboob Khan's *Andaz* is enshrined in posterity's hall of fame as one of the most memorable films ever made in the history of Indian cinema. It marked the stepping into a new era, the era of tomorrow which comes at periodic intervals when one generation withers and the next begins to replace it. Mehboob Khan may or may not have consciously realized or perceived it then but the fact is that he had, in casting Nargis along with Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor, achieved the casting coup of all time. There were many advantages to this move. Firstly, known stars roped in higher amounts from the distributors; secondly, known stars knew instinctively what their director wanted, and could deliver the goods in front of the camera with a minimum of retakes. Valuable time was invariably saved during the shooting so was valuable money and valuable raw film too!

None of the three lead stars was a newcomer when Mehboob Khan cast them in *Andaz*. The trio cast a magic spell on the youth of the country, able as they were to sway the emotions, mould the thought processes, influencing the sartorial tastes, hairstyles, mannerisms, ideas, sentiments and behaviour patterns of their millions of fans. Contemporaries in the fullest sense of the word, they appeared on the Indian film horizon at the same time and rose over a period to become the top personalities of the Indian screen. That is why, in more ways than one, Mehboob Khan's *Andaz* was a significant picture. Not only was it the first movie to gain for Indian cinema a Hollywood standard of technique and artistry, but in it, Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar appeared together for the first and last time in their careers.

In 1955, Raj Kapoor saw Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* in Madras, where he was shooting for a film called *Chori Chori*. He was dumbfounded with admiration. He asked Satyajit Ray to direct a film for R.K. Films, but this never happened, as Satyajit Ray confessed he was not very conversant in the Hindi language.

Satyajit Ray on Raj Kapoor

My association with Raj Kapoor dates back thirty years. He was a friend. He saw my first film, *Pather Panchali*, and was so moved by it that he gave me carte

blanche to do whatever I wanted for him. But I did not take up his offer then as it would have involved working in Hindi. That, however, did not in any way hamper our friendship. He was warm, friendly, affectionate towards me till the end. One could call him dildariya. He did not have any affectations about him; he was totally open. I saw him first in *Aag* and found him very promising. Other films of his that I remember are *Awara* and *Mera Naam Joker*. I liked the first part of *Mera Naam Joker*. However, *Shree 420* was, perhaps, his best film. The last film of his that I saw was *Bobby*. After that I lost interest. Raj Kapoor himself admitted that he made films for the masses, not people like us. It was the unaffected side of Raj that I liked most. He had great regard for me and he respected me. As for his contribution to Indian cinema, I think he was an extremely good craftsman and a master showman.

Prem Nath

Prem Nath, Raj Kapoor's brother-in-law, joined him when he was on the threshold of building his own career. Both made their debut with *Aag*, and Prem Nath went on to scale greater heights with films like *Barsaat*, a cameo appearance in *Awara*, *Dharam Karam* and *Bobby*. The combination of Raj Kapoor, the introvert, and

Prem Nath, the extrovert, was a team which strengthened the Raj Kapoor phenomenon. Prem Nath relates: 'When Prithvi Theatre was staging its play *Deewar* in Nagpur, both Raj Kapoor and I used to play the role of Ramu, the servant. It was Holi, a day spent in revelry, drinking and singing festive songs. Having overdone the celebration, Raj lost his voice and was unable to go on beyond the first act of the evening show. He sent me on stage in his place, saying: "The audience cannot hear me, go and play my role in the next act because the show must go on." I did, and no one noticed the change.'

Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor and Prem Nath

Dilip Kumar

Both Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar had much in common. Both were born in December in Peshawar. Dilip Kumar on 11 December 1922 and Raj Kapoor 14 December 1924. Both went to the same school, both had the same friends, and in later years, both entered the same profession. From the beginning, Raj Kapoor was the cocksure youngster, brimming with youthful overconfidence and drawn irresistibly to the stage and screen. Dilip Kumar, on the other hand, was always self-effacing and retiring by nature. So much so that, in fact, he used to refuse to take part even in school plays. 'I'll drop dead from sheer fright!' he would tell Raj Kapoor. In their early twenties, Raj Kapoor was a strutting spectator on the cricket fields, with unkempt hair, sporting a pair of goggles with only one arm fitted over a single ear. Dilip Kumar sat at home reading Jean Paul Sartre. Nevertheless, the same superhuman urge impelled them both, although from opposite ends as it were, making them, with their contrary natures and radically opposite approaches to the histrionic art, two sides of the same priceless coin. Thrown constantly together in the world of films, these two distinct individuals were soon to surge ahead, outpacing their lesser contemporaries and assuming a dual leadership which often expressed itself in keen competition and a smouldering, sometimes unapparent, rivalry. Raj Kapoor always drew a

comparison between fans of his colleague Dilip Kumar and his own. He said, 'My fans are the poor, the street urchins, the lame, the blind, the underdog and the have-nots of this world! Not the mature and sophisticated young women! No, they're all Dilip Kumar fans! They are all madly in love with him!'

Raj Kapoor with wife Krishna, Dilip Kumar and Saira Banu

Rajendra Kumar

After Raj Kapoor's death, Rajendra Kumar recalled: 'When Mukesh, Raj Kapoor's dearest friend and colleague, died in USA of heart failure, Raj-ji and I went to Bombay airport to receive the body. When the coffin came out of the hold, Raj-ji looked at it and said sorrowfully, "This friend of ours went as a passenger and has come back as luggage." It is ironical that destiny took Raj Kapoor too to Delhi as an honoured passenger and brought him back, like Mukesh, as cargo. The following morning, when Mukesh's body was to be taken from his house for cremation, all the arrangements for the funeral were made by Raj-ji. As he respected all religions, he had called priests of all faiths to recite prayers. I was standing next to him. He looked at me and said, "Brother, remember when I go, do the same for me." And we did.'

From left: Raj Kapoor, Rajendra Kumar, Dilip Kumar and Shammi Kapoor

Music

'In our country, our whole existence, our lifestyle, our cultural fabric is wedded to music. Our life, our birth is wedded to music. Our death is wedded to a lament, which is also music. Our rituals, our gods, our goddesses, our festivals, our harvesting, everything is music, music, music ... Where words fail, it is music that conveys much more than all words put together.'—Raj Kapoor

With Lata Mangeshkar

With Mukesh

Raj Kapoor on Lata Mangeshkar

A very big name which has been a constant companion throughout, to many melodies in my films, is Lata Mangeshkar. *Barsaat* was the first time Lata was introduced in my films. It was as if I had been waiting for her to enter, to make Raj Kapoor and his music what it is today. People have told you of my interest in music but they may not have spoken of my prerna which is Lata.

Raj Kapoor with wife Krishna and Lata Mangeshkar

Lata Mangeshkar on her association with Raj Kapoor

It was sometime in 1948 I was recording a song at the Famous recording studio for music director Anil Biswas. At that time, Raj Kapoor had a very small office on the second floor in the same building. Anil Biswas contacted him and asked him to come down to the studio and listen to my voice. I sang and he listened. There was no reaction. He listened and left! Next day, Anil Biswas called and said that Raj Kapoor has called you at the Mahalaxmi office.

In Kolhapur, I had seen Prithviraj Kapoor's film *Sikandar* fifteen times. I was a great fan of his. He was tall and so handsome. I thought it might be a good opportunity to meet my favourite star's son, Raj Kapoor. I accepted the invite and went. Raj Kapoor was sitting on his desk in his office. I sat across the table. He said, 'I want you to sing for my film,' and asked me what that would cost him. I responded by saying any amount that he gave me would be acceptable. He replied by offering me rupees 500 for the same. At this time, Ram Ganguly was the music director and both Shankar and Jaikishen were music arrangers. They all worked together at Prithvi Theatres. Shankar was on the tabla and Jaikishen on the harmonium. They sang and taught me the song '*Jiya bekarar hai*' for the film *Barsaat*.

It was after this recording that Raj Kapoor took the decision that the music director of the film would be Shankar-Jaikishen and not Ram Ganguly. This was the historic decision, with Shailendra and Hasrat Jaipuri handling the lyrics, that created the evergreen music of R.K. Films.

I also recall Raj-ji cautioning Jaikishen. He was concerned about my ability to sing commercial film songs, being a classical singer! Hearing this I was naturally very upset. I was new and had not worked in the film industry. I sang all the songs in *Barsaat*. It was very gratifying for me to hear of a request from Raj saab for a bhairavi alaap in a certain song in *Barsaat*. I sang it and he loved it and was very happy. The music of this film was very successful. Later, for the following films, he would leave the details of the melody to me. But he always wanted an alaap which would touch the hearts of millions of people.

Dev Anand, Raj Kapoor, Lata Mangeshkar and Dilip Kumar

I recall a time when we were recording the famous song in *Awara*, '*Ghar aaya mera pardesi*', with Manna Dey accompanying me. We reached the recording theatre. Shankar and Jaikishen made us learn the lyrics and the melody of the song, but Raj saab, who came later, rejected our entire day's work. He said to Jaikishen, 'I don't want a popatiya song!' He changed the whole song. He also added an alaap to the song! All this went on till 3 a.m. and only after it was done did he say, 'Now let us eat!' He had arranged food for the entire unit. I remember the entire team sat in the middle of the road and ate. There was almost no traffic those days, particularly at 3 a.m. A sheet was spread on the road where we all ate and left for home. This was his way of working. One day when Raj-ji's film *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai* was being made, he called me at 11 p.m. and said, 'Come right now! I need your alaap!' The recording studio was close to my house and by midnight I was there. The song was being sung by Mukesh. Raj-ji said, 'I wish to add an alaap to the song that is being recorded, one that the people will always remember!' He added, 'You don't have to be advised by Shankar or Jaikishen.' The alaap was recorded and Raj-ji loved it. Jaikishen, the music director, however, was angry and upset about this. Raj-ji said to him, 'Chhalia Babu (the pet name he called him by), what I have to do, I will do. Please do not interfere.' Raj-ji further went on to add another alaap in the same song at an even higher pitch! Raj-ji was very happy and the song was a big hit. It was beautifully picturized and became the highlight of the film. Even nature supported Raj-ji's decision of adding the high-pitched alaap by casting a cloud that moved with the cavalcade of dacoits who were on their way to surrender themselves in the film!

From left: Singers Geeta Dutt and Lata Mangeshkar with Raj Kapoor

Raj Kapoor with Nargis and Lata Mangeshkar. The xylophone was specifically bought to create

certain musical effects in the dream sequence in Awara.

I was also bad tempered. I used to fight. I was recording with his son Randhir Kapoor for his film *Kal Aaj Aur Kal*. Raj-ji had come for the recording. There, he told me that he was soon starting his next film called *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* for which he wanted my brother Hridaynath Mangeshkar to score the music. I replied to him saying that I would ask my brother. I managed to persuade my brother who was not really interested in scoring scores for films. Raj-ji had heard Hridaynath's music and it was Mukesh who had suggested his name. I left for my US trip where I was shocked to hear from Mukesh, 'Hridaynath ki picture gai (Hridaynath has lost the film)!' It was very embarrassing for me. Hridaynath called me and said that he had accepted the film because of me but the newspapers were writing otherwise. He was offended and embarrassed. I was very angry with Raj-ji. On my return, I called him and said, 'Why did you do this? I had persuaded him because you had asked me to!'

~

Hridaynath was victimized by this industry's politics. Raj Kapoor had approached him himself to compose the music for *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*. Everything was almost finalized when Laxmikant and Pyarelal went and made Raj Kapoor change his mind at the last moment. Because of what Raj Kapoor had done to Hridaynath, Lata took on a fight with Raj Kapoor. She told him, 'I will not sing for you now!'

Lata Mangeshkar started harassing Raj Kapoor. She started demanding royalty from him for the songs that she would sing in the future, as she did with other producers. She wanted more money and even created delays in recording for him. It was only after Pandit Narendra Sharma, who was very dear to Lata Mangeshkar and whom she called 'Papa', persuaded her that she was the only one who could

do justice to the song, lyrics of which were written by him, that she agreed to once again sing for R.K. Films. ‘I put conditions that I would not talk to anyone at the recording studios. I would sing and I would leave,’ Lata Mangeshkar said. She even asked Laxmikant and Pyarelal not to allow Raj Kapoor inside the recording room but naughty as he was, he kept needling her by constantly being around and even telling Laxmikant and Pyarelal, loud enough to reach Lata’s ears, to place some more alaaps in the songs! ‘I recall how I angrily muttered under my breath, “Oh, please! One more such suggestion and I will fill the entire song with only alaaps!” She even made him go through a long wait for her final recording for the film and only sang the song after finishing her foreign tour. But, Raj Kapoor, fully knowing her immense artistic value, waited patiently and his patience paid off. Today, listening to Lata Mangeshkar’s still popular, intricate classics like ‘*Satyam Shivam Sundaram*’, ‘*Bhor bhaye panghat pe*’ and ‘*Yashomatee maiyaa se*’, one cannot imagine that these songs were recorded by the melody queen in such an angry mood and that too, all in single takes. Lata Mangeshkar remembered, ‘I learnt and rehearsed the songs with music directors Laxmikant and Pyarelal. The song was recorded in a single take. Raj Kapoor loved it and repeatedly said, “Very good, very good!” I sang the song and went straight to the car, without talking to anyone. *Bobby* was being made. I called Raj Kapoor and told him that the singers association had asked the singers to take royalty directly from the producers. He immediately replied, “*Main yahan* business *karne aaya hoon*, royalty *batnein nahin* (I have come here to do business and not share royalty)!” I replied, “*Aap* business *karne aayen hain aur mein Rani Bagh aayi hoon* (You have come to do business and I have come to the zoo)!”

Lata Mangeshkar breaking the coconut on the sets of Bobby. *She returned to the R.K. fold after a brief falling out post* Sangam. *Seen here with Anand Bakshi, Laxmikant-Pyarelal and Raj Kapoor.*

With Mukesh, in the 1950s in Moscow, singing 'Awara hoon' *for his fans*

On Raj Kapoor's request, Laxmikant and Pyarelal tried to intervene in this cold war. Lata Mangeshkar rejected all their efforts and asked them not to bother her

any further. Eventually, Raj Kapoor called her and said, 'If you refuse to sing for my film, *main aapke ghar ke saamne tambu laga ke baithoonga* (I will put up a tent in front of your house and sit on dharna)." Eventually, she acquiesced and agreed to sing for *Bobby*. Singing for a sixteen-year-old, Lata Mangeshkar effortlessly carried off *Bobby*'s popular songs such as '*Aye phansaa*', '*Jhooth bole kauwaa kaate*', '*Aksar koi ladka*', and she even lent her magic to the memorable song '*Ankhiyon ko rahne de ankhiyon ke aas paas*', which was based on a Punjabi folk song. Lata and Shailendra Singh's fantasy song, '*Chaabi kho jaaye*', was perhaps the biggest hit from the film.

Raj Kapoor on his music collaborators

There was Mukesh, my soul, my voice, I was a mere body. It was he who sang to the hearts of the people all over the world, not me. Raj Kapoor was an image, just a carcass of flesh and bones. When he (Mukesh) died, it was destroyed. I felt, there goes my breath, there goes my soul. I know what went away from me. There was a void, a vacuum and then I had to get over it and go on. This is the price an artist pays.

Raj Kapoor with Mukesh rehearsing a song for Mera Naam Joker

They say it is the singer and not the song, but for me it is the singer and the song. Singers like Lata-ji, Mukesh-ji, Rafi-ji, Manna Dey have travelled great distances with me, all through my path in films. I have gained a lot from them. I have gained a lot from my lyricists, Shailendra and Hasrat Jaipuri, from my music directors, Ram Ganguly, Shankar and Jaikishen, Laxmikant and Pyarelal, Ravindra Jain. They are the essence, I am merely the conductor. The essence is their faculty, their talent, their art. I am shining in their glory.

My subjects always unerringly suggested a particular kind of music to me—that style would work out in the final unfolding of the film. There was a certain vigour and aggression called for in the style of music. It is very important to me that the songs in my

films have a meaning and that certain something which touches the heart the first time you hear them. My screen personality has never been a thing apart from my music. You could say that at times music in my films even replaced dialogue. No song more succinctly sums up my approach to film-making, indeed to life, than *'Jeena yahaan, marna yahaan'*. Any piece of music that goes into my film has to come from the heart. I am made that way, I can't accept cacophony for melody. To me music is that which touches the heart.

~

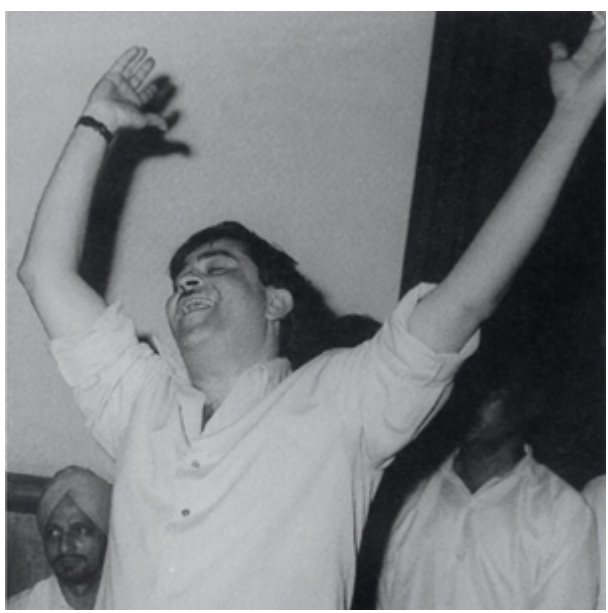
Shailendra, Shankar, Jaikishen and Mukesh were all part of the charmed inner circle of Raj Kapoor. It is interesting to recount how Shailendra came to write lyrics for R.K. Films, for it says a lot about Raj Kapoor as an artist and a human being.

Mukesh, Hasrat Jaipuri, Raj Kapoor and Anandswami

Shailendra, a railway employee who wrote poetry, was a leftist by conviction. He was an intense young man, and a poet of the new school, a poet of the people. He wrote colloquially, and the sentiments he voiced were of the masses. Like any idealist, Shailendra was a little disdainful of films and film people. Raj Kapoor had heard Shailendra at a mushaira and asked him to write for him. Shailendra refused. Not a man to give up easily, Raj invited Shailendra over to 'the cottage' and, after a long session, repeated his offer. Again, Shailendra refused. 'All right, forget it. But here's this envelope,' Raj Kapoor said, putting some money into an envelope. He sealed the envelope and wrote Shailendra's name on it. 'I'm keeping it in the office. Any time you're in trouble and need

money, come and take it away. No strings attached.' Inevitably, there came a time when the fiery poet needed money. His eldest son was about to be born, and he needed to pay hospital bills. He came and took the envelope away. Raj was informed of it, but he made no effort to contact the poet. Some days later, Shailendra came himself, with a sheaf of poetry. 'These are for you,' he said. 'You don't have to do this,' Raj said. 'Do you think I'll take charity?' the poet snapped. And thus, Shailendra became an important addition to the R.K. treasury, and went on to become one of the most memorable figures of Indian cinema.

Shailendra's *Teesri Kasam* was being shot somewhere near Damoh in Madhya Pradesh. Shailendra's brother-in-law was married to the daughter of Professor Ghosh who lived in Damoh. Director Basu Bhattacharya had approved of the location. It was a typical village, like you see anywhere in rural India. As a matter of fact, such villages existed in Maharashtra and there was no particular reason to shoot there accept the familiarity of Shailendra's brother-in-law who was closely associated with the film, solely on the strength of being related to Shailendra. It was extremely inconvenient to the stars and technicians but all of them loved Shailendra so deeply that they undertook the tedious journey. Raj Kapoor arrived there with his personal attendant John who used to cook for him. He did not bring his make-up man and hair dresser etc., only because he wanted to save the producer's money. It's of importance to note that he discouraged Shailendra from producing only because it was unsuited to his poetic temperament. So much so that he offered to produce *Teesri Kasam* with Shailendra as the executive producer with a huge cut in the profit. Shailendra was hell-bent on producing himself because he had also planned to produce Phanishwar Nath Renu's other stories, including his novels *Maila Aanchal* and *Parti Parikatha*.



Raj Kapoor was staying at the Imperial Hotel, New Delhi, with his wife Krishna and his close friend Mukesh. It was the occasion of the premiere of *Teesri Kasam*. Shailendra was asked not to come to Delhi because there was an arrest warrant against him. His brother-in-law had sold the distribution rights to two distributors. Raj Kapoor asked Mukesh to find out the truth. One distributor had paid ?80,000 and was willing to withdraw legal proceedings on receipt of his capital amount only. Raj Kapoor paid the money and managed to release the film. Mukesh took care of the legal details. Vithal Bhai Patel threw a post release party in the newly inaugurated hotel in Delhi. Sad, but true, the stress of making the film *Teesri Kasam* was responsible for Shailendra's death and that too on the birthday of his dear colleague and friend Raj Kapoor.

With music directors Kalyanji, Anandji, Shankar, Jaikishen, Laxmikant, Pyarelal

Raj Kapoor on music

I do not say that I compose music, but I conduct it. I get my music done the way I visualize it, at what particular moment the woodwinds should flow, at what intensity and volume the percussion. Now that is the art of conducting. So, it has a very distinct quality to it, no matter who the composer or the writer is.

From the earliest days, I have been interested in music. In fact, my first ambition was to be a music director. I even sang in my earlier films like *Chittor Vijay*, *Jail Yatra* and *Gopinath*. My interest in music goes back to my childhood, with Papaji in the theatre in Calcutta. What attracted me most was Rai Chand Boral's music room. Later, when we came to Bombay, Papaji joined Narayan Rao Vyas's Academy of Music in Matunga where for three years I learnt classical music, playing the harmonium, tabla, sitar, etc. I was also with Anil da (Anil Biswas) for some time. I remember, as a clapper boy at Bombay Talkies I was suspended for a week for being absent in the music hall when director Ramsey was looking for me. Then in Prithvi Theatre, after the shows, we used to sit together to compose tunes. I was very fond of composing tunes. I composed a few with Ram Babu (Ram Ganguly); also with Shankar and Jaikishen, one was a harmonium player and the other a tabla player. And it was there that this team of Shankar-Jaikishen and Raj Kapoor was born.

From *Barsaat* onwards my music has not been something that just comes in, but an

integral part of the fabric of the film. Music is one form of entertainment that reaches millions in this poor developing country, and it is the cheapest. People want their music, their dances, their thrills, their magic shows, circus, fights, everything. Music being an integral part of our cultural life, you cannot just root it out. Hence, even in a film like *Jagte Raho*, originally without music, I found two or three situations which needed songs. But I always try to include songs that carry on the movement of the story and if I am not able to do it, and if the song just stays there, stagnates, I cut it off. Many a time I have recorded a song, picturized it, and then thrown it out. This happened in *Sangam*; the song filmed in Venice was not used. Also in *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*.

Now I am working with Laxmikant-Pyarelal. They ask what is it that you want? I explain the situation, the preceding scene, the following scene, the overall impact of the sequence, get the words written, give it to them, tell them that when the scene is being enacted by the artists, the emotional content is to this pitch and the background music will be something like this and from here the song emerges. So they have a tremendous amount of information on what the song is all about and then they compose it, and it becomes easier, because bit by bit I start visualizing the song. In *Bobby*, Laxmikant-Pyarelal had a tune beautifully done. But there was something missing in it, something which didn't connect … *'Hum tum ek kamre mein band ho, aur chaabi kho jaye…'* As far as the tune, melody and rhyme were concerned, it was just about okay. So, what to do? Then an idea struck us, '*Socho kabhi aisa ho to kya ho*'. That was it. With that new line, there could be fantasy and fantasies. So, we try to search for things like that. Sometimes we find them, sometimes we don't.

In *Prem Rog* there are six songs and they are beautifully written, driven by the story, the situations, the characters. Characters express themselves in dialogue, or in verse. So, music is the pitch of an emotion, where words fail to render an emotion, one bursts into song. One song in *Prem Rog* was picturized in Holland, in a tulip field. At one point in the film the boy tells the girl, 'When you smile it's as if a million flowers have bloomed.' Now, this thought, 'a million flowers', stuck in my mind. And where do I get a million flowers? I tried all over. I went to the UP government, there is a valley of flowers in Badrinath but it is not easily accessible. I had seen this in Holland, so I thought about shooting there and was clever enough to camouflage the fact that it was a modern city in Europe. Well, I think it's going to be one of the finest picturized songs in years.

~

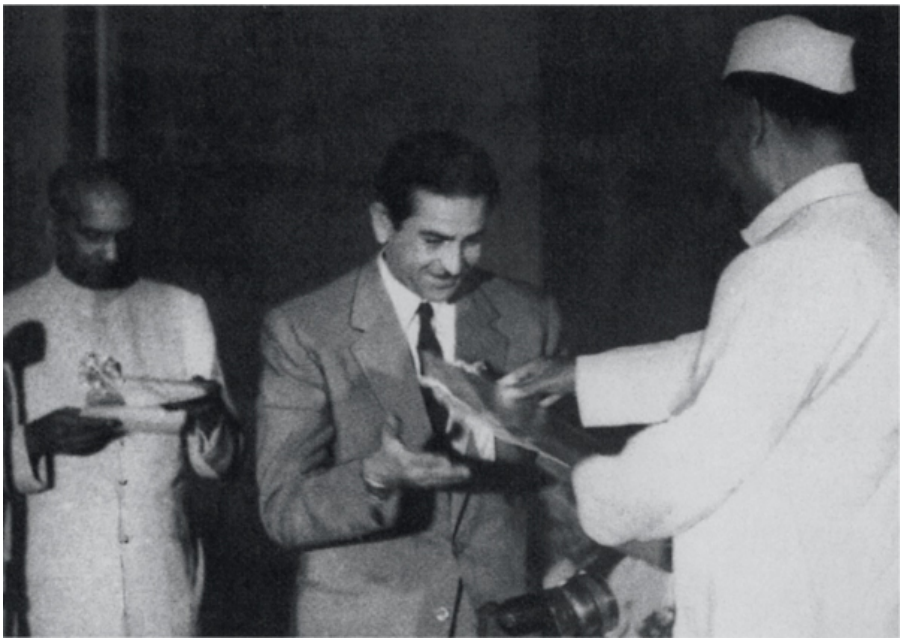
As one critic observed, Raj Kapoor poured every ounce of creative energy into the shaping of the music in his films. He was like an architect, building his films on the foundation of music. He knew exactly what he wanted from his composers, lyricists and singers. He was not one to be easily satisfied. He would coax, cajole, badger his team and call it a day only when he had the songs perfect, the tune

right, the words correct, the orchestra rich and the recording flawless. Then he would lie back and start thinking of a hundred different ways of bringing that song to life on screen.

Political Meetings

'A showman and a politician run on the same platform ... They sell dreams.'—Raj Kapoor

With Indira Gandhi and Shankar-Jaikishen



Receiving the National Award from former President Dr Rajendra Prasad (1956)

With Padmini and former President Dr S. Radhakrishnan

I have always believed, and I say it again emphatically, that a showman and a politician run on the same platform, they sell dreams. Some dreams come true, some don't. Making

a movie is a bit like contesting an election, but at least you can rig an election, you can't rig public opinion!

Receiving the National Award from former President Dr Zakir Husain

Once, after Jawaharlal Nehru returned from a trip to the Soviet Union which included a meeting with Stalin, he happened to bump into Papaji (my father Prithviraj Kapoor). Nehru-ji did not watch many movies, but he knew my father well. He took my father aside and said, 'What is this film "vagabond", *Awara*, that your son has made? Stalin was talking about it all the time.'

Once Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand and I were invited to spend some time with the Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, at his Teen Murti residence. We were escorted there by security guards on their motorbikes, in front of and behind our limousine, and were received by his daughter, Indira Gandhi, who was then looking after the Nehru household. She was modest and shy, spoke only a few words, but was extremely courteous, entertaining us with cups of very special tea. Then we were ushered into Panditji's study, to be monopolized by him thereafter.

Receiving the Padma Bhushan from former President V.V. Giri (1971)

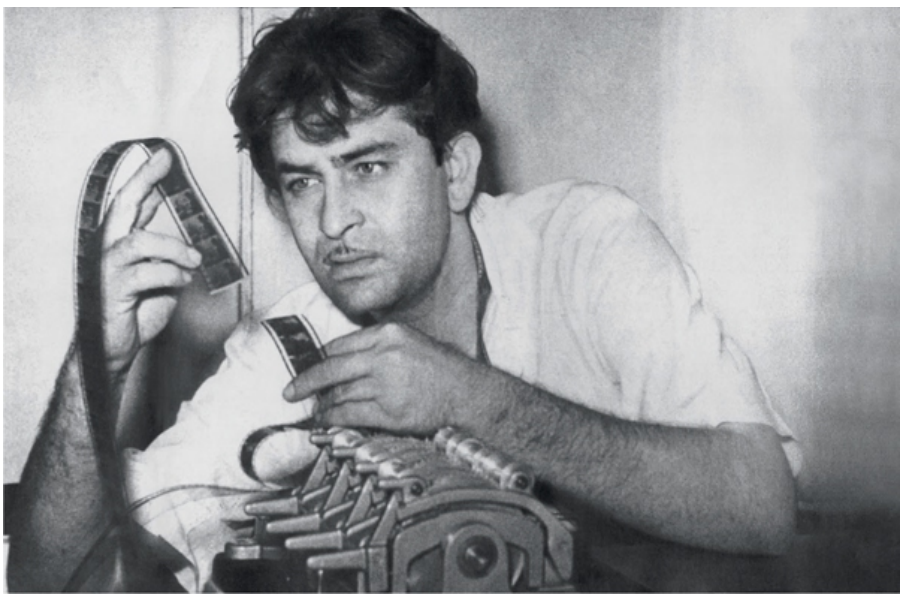
Raj Kapoor with Vyjayanthimala and former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru

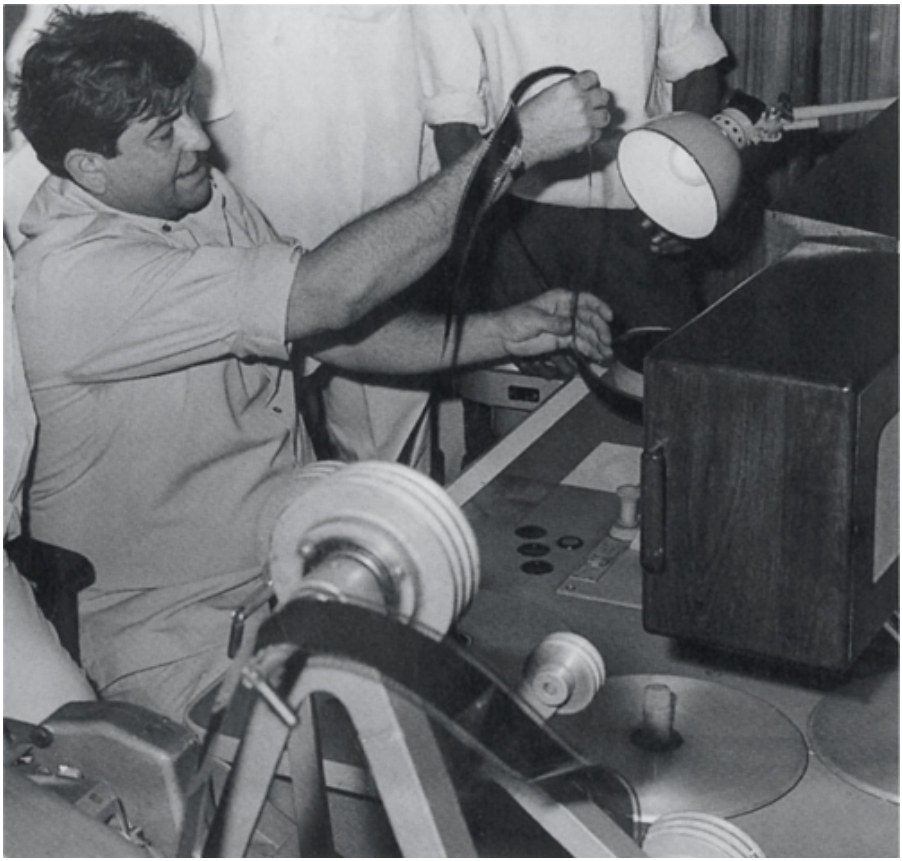
He had just recovered from an unfortunate stroke and looked mellow and somewhat resigned. He held the Big Three, as our famous trio used to be called, in his arms and was soon in a great mood, recounting his encounters with some of the great world leaders of his time. We listened to him in rapt attention, like children listening to their grandfather narrating a fabulous adventure tale. He was just like a child, taking great pride and joy in showing us some of the mementos he had received from many well-known contemporaries. We all opened up, as if we had found a long-lost friend and he reacted and reciprocated in a similar fashion, with childlike joy. He was perhaps looking for a moment of escape from his overburdened life that was full of having to deal with the political pressure of one-upmanship and sycophancy around him. We asked him, 'We hear you used to be very popular and amorously attracted to ladies wherever you went, Panditji!' 'Not as popular as you fellows are!' was his quick retort with his famous smile. We had read of him having the most charming smile and the most photogenic face. So, we asked, 'Your devastating smile stole the heart of Lady Mountbatten … is it true, sir?' He blushed, enjoying the question and laughing it away saying, 'I love all these stories about me!' 'But they all say she herself confessed her weakness for you!' Dilip Kumar joined in, in a very humorous strain. 'People made me believe in those stories.' He laughed again

light-heartedly. I was now scanning his study with interest and asked, 'Is that the famous seat from where the Prime Minister of our country issues his dictates to his nation?' He looked at the chair and said, laughing, 'Go and sit there. You'll find out.' Panditji charmed us completely. But I could discern in him a certain sadness, of a man looking at the tragic happenings around him. The great leader who wrote about history in his *The Discovery of India* while he was in jail fighting for India's independence and made history achieving it, was soon to become a part of history. He could not hide his premonition that he was waiting for a call from his creator, from the way he laughed a little sorrowfully at times.

Work

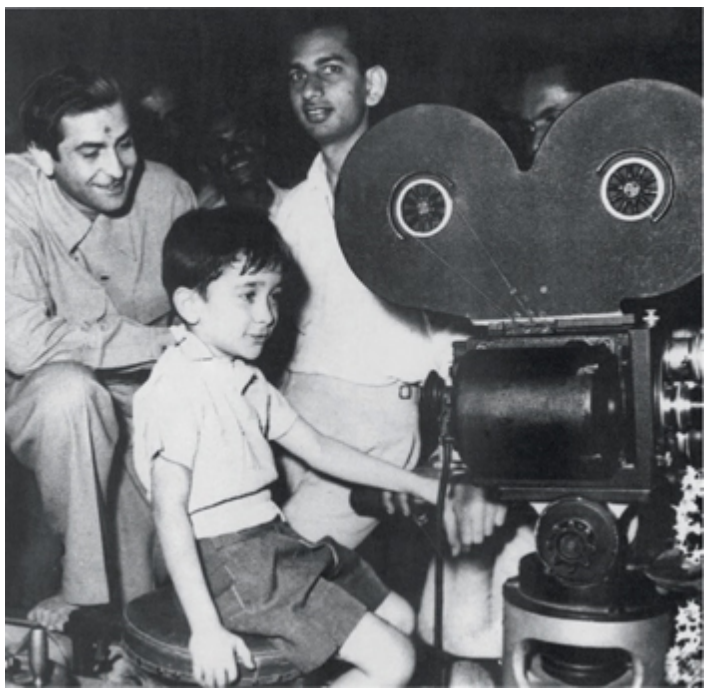
'Mine is not a one-man show, I have always worked through institutions, and my contribution has always been only as a kind of fountainhead.'—Raj Kapoor





I had to learn a lot to know cinema. One was that editing, montage, is one of the most important things one must know if one wants to become a man of cinema. You create the rhythm within yourself. Footage is what teaches you rhythm. A foot extra can ruin a scene and a foot less would also be as damaging. It's really a very creative process. Films are made on the writing table and the editing table; the rest is mere jugglery. I don't think I have done as much for any other film of mine as I did for *Prem Rog*. The story was complete but the screenplay was written over a period of probably a year or so, and you cannot be precise about the length of a film. You may exceed and I have always exceeded. For instance, you have this big set for *Prem Rog* and when you enter the set for the first time everything is new because we do not have the system of having models prepared, making a scenario, pre-planning camera movements, cuts. It is as if the whole thing unfolds in front of you for the very first time, and you start thinking, how is this to be transposed to celluloid? The very first shot I take is one showing the entire topography. The whole thing is fresh and new and you want to show, well, here is the staircase, here's

the portico, here are the arches, these are the pillars, this is the veranda and from here a person comes down the staircase and walks through the portico and then he confronts a character and speaks. Later, when you have shot the film and are nearer its completion, you edit the shot in the context of the previous scene and the subsequent scenes and you find that this length of shot, forty or fifty feet, is not necessary. The set has been repeated so many times through the film that people have gradually become aware of what is where, whether this is the first floor or the second floor or the kitchen. So, that long first shot was unnecessary. I am at this very stage of *Prem Rog* now, where I am trying to prune and largely I have done it, but it is a very, very painful thing, especially if you also happen to be the producer of the film, because you have unnecessarily spent so much time and labour and money. I keep telling myself: 'You idiot, Raj Kapoor, you will never learn, you always overdo it!' I am afraid all these years have not been able to teach me, but then, suppose I had not shot it all and I needed it. The set wouldn't be there any more. What would I do then? So, it is better to have more shots with you so that you can montage: you can have birds flying, you can have ripples on the water, you can have swaying trees and fields. Perhaps you may not use all those shots, but if you have them you would like to put bits of them in to suggest, say, an approaching storm.

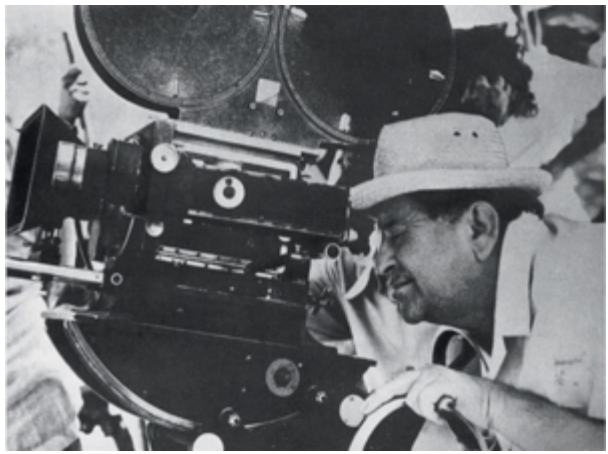


With a young Randhir Kapoor

With Vyjayanthimala

My early films *Aag*, *Barsaat* and *Awara* were influenced by the foreign films I saw. Mostly by the three Italians who had visited the 1952 film festival in Bombay: Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica and Cesare Zavattini. They were the pioneers of the neorealism movement in Italy. I was tremendously moved by De Sica's films, especially *Miracle in Milan*, *Bicycle Thieves* and *Shoeshine*. Zavattini was De Sica's screenplay writer and I had long chats with him. Frank Capra was also in India for the festival and I had long talks with him too. The Capra films, *It Happened One Night* and *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, influenced me too. I was also an admirer of Cecil B. DeMille, I saw all his films, but the ones that impressed me most were *The Ten Commandments*, *Reap the Wild Wind* and *The Greatest Show on Earth*. De Sica and Zavattini brought to the screen what they saw and felt. Something real. Slices of life. In an American film, you could never see a little boy piddling. *In Bicycle Thieves* the boy piddles and the father waits on the side of the road with his bicycle ... it is so simple. It is so real. However, the most effective part of the whole

movement was the allegories that were part of the films. That was very important. The other thing was coming out of the four walls of the studio and making films outdoors. Many of these directors told me, 'How lucky you are! In India, you have the sun shining all the year round, why do you shoot inside a studio? With such brilliant light outside, why do you shoot with artificial landscapes? We work in the studios only when it is necessary.'



Quality products always take time. This medium takes up so much of one's energy. Even when you're just thinking, planning or daydreaming about the films, it is work. One of my favourite anecdotes is about Joseph Conrad. Somebody once asked him what was the most difficult thing he had to do connected with his work and he replied, 'It is to convince my wife that when I am staring out of the window I am really working.' Even when I am giving an interview I am thinking of the shape of the films to come, the scene

to be shot, the scenes already shot. So, am I not working?

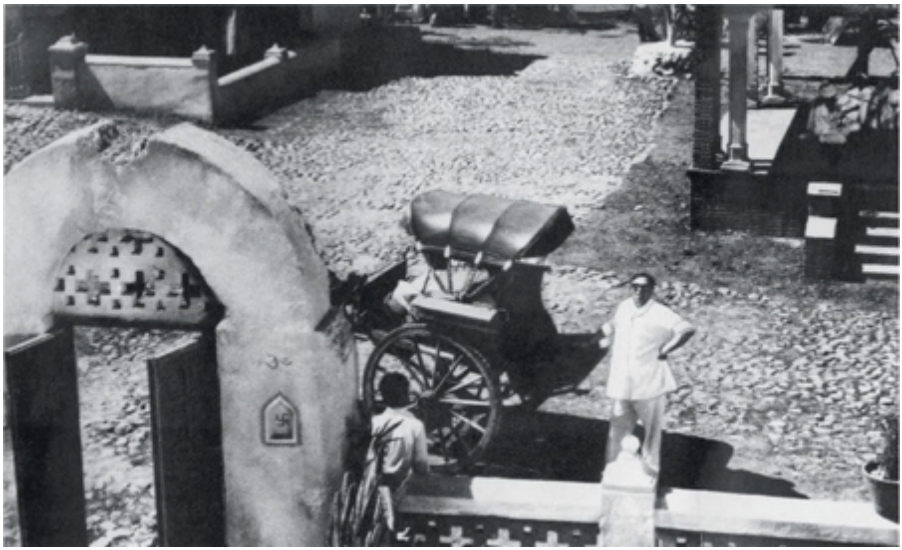
~

Even in his last days, when he was very unwell, Raj Kapoor had work on his mind. Randhir, who completed and released his father's unfinished project *Henna* in 1990, remembers: 'It is uncanny that my father, just a day before he was hospitalized, gave me five thousand rupees and said: "I want you to direct *Henna*".'

The cottage was Papa's retreat, built even before R.K. Studios, which came up next to it. His cottage was the nerve centre of his creative, professional and personal life. He functioned from this cottage squatting cross-legged on the ground. Whether it was attending to business matters or discussing a script. On the walls hung images of all the gods and prophets of all the religions of the world, an old portrait of his father, Prithviraj Kapoor, Nargis in *Awara*, Padmini in *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai*, and Vyjayanthimala in *Sangam*. These are the great people whose portraits are hung on the wall.

~

I call it my altar, it represents all religions, they are great souls, they are people who have been great thinkers and who have brought mankind to a state where today we feel and know a little, if not in totality, of what love is all about. What peace is all about and what spiritualism is all about. We may not have attained absolute transcendental knowledge of it, nevertheless we are gradually getting to it, ascending to it. This place for me is still the room it was way back then—even before my studio was built—in a quiet place, not the thickly populated suburban area of Bombay that it is today. Nevertheless, there is still a lot of peace that you find in this little cottage. It is a very small place, but it has great memories. The sanctity of this place comes from a great many artistes who have contributed to what Raj Kapoor is today or what R.K. Films is today. For me it is like the sanctum sanctorum, a place where, though many have left me and I myself am on the last leg of my life, there will always be somebody to take over and perpetuate what people have given and left behind. I am immensely enriched when I sit here and think. I look at them, all my colleagues, and I thank them, and I pray, let us not wither away, let this place be consolidated, no matter what happens, so that it can bring the minds of people together and contribute to the art of cinema.



I fundamentally believe that film art is nobody's art except the film-maker's, the director's art. The music director sees one part of the film, the writer has his part, and the art director has his. The complete thing is only in the mind of the director. And the director is also a human being, susceptible to all kinds of moods, problems—a fight with the wife at home, children going to school and being knocked down by a car or something, or it's one of those days when the actor is late, when the actress says she didn't get her gown in time and so on and so forth. You keep your cool and get on with the job. Sometimes you are successful, sometimes you are not. Film is a collective enterprise, it is not an individual, personal expression like writing or painting. When a writer begins to write, all he needs is a paper and pen, or a typewriter, and when he doesn't like what he has written, he just tears it up, throws it away and starts writing again. Probably a painter does something similar. But a film-maker—unfortunately, by the time he really sees what he has done, he cannot go back and start again. He has no money. This business is expensive. But once you have gone into it, what you do is pray to God; or try to believe each time that it is the biggest box-office hit you are making. An artiste is one who has all the qualities of politeness, softness and the ability to attract the love of others, and does any work as his own. If you can become an artiste loved by all, there cannot be a greater artiste than you. Another thing I have learnt is never to make anything you don't believe in. I have made films that I am convinced about, that I believe in. It has taken me a lot of time searching for scripts, or sometimes I have had scripts but I have not made them till I got the right people, for instance, *Sangam*. And there have been scripts that have just come my way, like *Awara*, *Shree 420*, *Jagte Raho* and so forth. Sometimes I am offered films or scripts that are supposed to be box-office material, but I have never been enamoured by them. Not that my films have not been popular or box-office hits; perhaps they have been

much more than all the others put together. Nevertheless, what convinces me is the human value in a script.

~

Raj Kapoor's subjects and themes were so watertight that he could pick and choose his cast at will. The cast only had to have a screen presence suitable for the character, the rest was done by the subject and theme. However, there is more to it than that. If you have noticed, *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai*, *Sangam*, *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*, *Bobby*, *Prem Rog* and *Henna* had more than the obvious reasons for the cast. In particular, Pran in *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai*, a handsome Rajendra Kumar in *Sangam*, Prem Chopra in *Bobby*, Zeenat in *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*, Shammi Kapoor in *Prem Rog* and Saeed Jaffery in *Henna* were obviously chosen with more than the normal care. They fitted the roles in more ways than one.

The screenplay simply falls into place if the characters and actors are a perfect match. If an entire movie of Raj Kapoor is considered as one epic song, the screenplays will qualify as the lyrics. But here is the catch, the screenplay was never poetic. It was mostly in simple Hindi and always in character. The nearest he would get to philosophical speech was at the end of the film while closing out. Like Raj Kapoor's fondness for folk songs in music, his scripts were also simple and spoke straight to a person's heart, and never into the ears. The scene from the film, *Mera Naam Joker*, where the Russian girl and he are parting, she asks him, '*Tum naaraaz toh nahin ho* (Are you angry)?' He shakes his head. She asks again, '*Tum dukhi toh nahin ho* (Are you unhappy)?' He shakes his head again. Then she says, '*Chashma utaaro* (Remove your glasses).' That was the closest he needed to go to philosophy in his screenplay.

~

Different people view their birthdays in different ways. For most people, it is a day of celebration and merrymaking. My own birthday has more significance for my workers than for myself. They enjoy themselves on that day, which is declared a workers' holiday at R.K. Studios. I have always measured my birthday in terms of my work and my films. It has always been a custom that every new film was launched at R.K. with a mahurat performed by my father Prithviraj Kapoor on 14 December.

So, my life is work, and my work is cinema. I dream cinema, I breathe cinema and I live cinema. I am just a simple man. I don't claim that I have any academic qualification, except that I have been quite aware of what is around me and hence have got to know a little bit of human philosophy and human kindness and compassion and that is probably what has given birth to the clown in me, and that clown, even at the cost of tears, tries to

make everybody happy. For I believe that every human being has a beautiful self, which is the clown. Cinema is one of the most effective forms of mass media and can touch millions because it is audio and visual at the same time. It gets you thinking and can trigger emotions. All films, irrespective of their language, have a universal appeal. The message transmitted through them reaches the hearts of the people. Films in Russian or Turkish or Pakistani have no difference. Whether American or Russian, a mother's tears have the same effect. Similarly, people's smiling faces are the same. Tears and smiles do not require a language. These can be experienced anywhere in the world with the same understanding.

~

'It is so well knit a team that I don't even have to spell out what I want,' Raj Kapoor said of his team at R.K. Films and Studios. What held the key to the team's success was its continuity. Radhu Karmakar, the cameraman who shot *Awara*, directed the camera unit in Raj Kapoor's last film, *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*, and was to play the same role in the making of *Henna* after Raj Kapoor's demise. S. Kala Chandra was Raj Kapoor's assistant director for thirty-eight years. Shankar-Jaikishen scored the music for Raj Kapoor's films till Jaikishen's death in 1970. Journalist V.P. Sathe and writer K.A. Abbas collaborated with Raj Kapoor for years on films like *Barsaat*, *Awara* and *Shree 420*. Shailendra, once he began writing lyrics for R.K. Films, continued to do so till his death. Hasrat Jaipuri also wrote lyrics regularly for Raj Kapoor.

Raj Kapoor's distributors also supported him all through, even with his last film *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*. This last film came at a crucial period for the fabulous showman. Financially, he was with his back to the wall. There was simply no money left for the vital last-minute production work so important to satisfy the perfectionist that Raj Kapoor was. As far as his distributors were concerned, commitments were fully drawn, and in some cases overdrawn. He nevertheless completed his film, and everything hinged on how the film would fare at the box office. And then the blow fell. Raj Kapoor never had any interest in the commercial side of his business, which always made him a victim of tax arrears. He was faced with the grave prospect of attachment from the income tax department. There was no one he could turn to, except his distributors. They had faith in him and rose to the occasion in his hour of need. The arrears were paid and the calamity averted. *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* went on to become the biggest hit of its time.

After *Shree 420*, Raj Kapoor was often referred to as 420, especially by his fans, and he delighted in it. Though on one occasion, he wasn't so delighted at first. Raj Kapoor recalled the incident at the diamond jubilee of *Sangam* at Apsara theatre, when he appeared on the stage along with most of his unit members. Apparently, when he returned after a long trip to the USSR, one of his workers at

R.K. Studios greeted him with 'Hello 420!'. Raj Kapoor was taken aback and wondered if it was just a joke or the worker, Damodar, was being disrespectful. He tried to dismiss it, but could not get it out of his mind. Eventually he called the worker and asked him to explain just what he had meant. Was it a joke? Delighted at the opportunity to explain how clever he'd been—so clever that even his boss had missed it—Damodar said: 'I only wanted to inform you that Sangam has completed sixty weeks at Apsara, which means 420 days!'

This incident is illustrative of the employer-employee camaraderie at R.K. Studios. The adage may be that 'No man is a hero to his valet', but at R.K. Studios, Raj was always the lovable hero first, a friend later and boss last. No wonder his team of technicians and artistes stood by him through thick and thin. Lyricist Shailendra related an incident which throws light on this aspect of Raj Kapoor's character. It was raining heavily one day and Shailendra took Raj Kapoor to his little hutment. The roof was leaking badly. 'Now you know how we people live,' Shailendra said. Raj was quiet for a long while, then whispered: 'It is in rooms like these that the real India lives. I will do something about it.'

As a director, I explain the situation and what I expect from the actor. It's up to him to emote the right way. That is where acting talent comes in. Whoever is acting or directing, the film is always the director's baby. After all, he has a concept of the movie in its totality. Take the phrase 'I love you'. You can say it in three different ways: by stressing any of the three different words. Only the director will know what word he wants stressed. He is like the conductor of a hundred-piece orchestra, aware of the strains and stresses. Even if the individual musicians are brilliant, they have to play under the conductor's baton. I have acted in several films directed by others and have been both blamed and praised for having surrendered my individuality to become just an actor following directions. (But) I do believe that cinema is the film-maker's art. Of course, there is music, layout, costume, editing and various things that go into it. But the director is the coordinator who presents a whole film as a work of art.

With Rishi Kapoor and Dimple Kapadia

With Padmini Kolhapure

We began our work in an age of optimism. The republic was new, the rulers were new to leadership. My cinema was born in an age of idealism. That is why the songs in my films have a pristine quality about them, the women have a fresh, innocent look. It is strange, but even in complex times such as the present, idealism still seems to work. But today anyone and everyone can become a producer or a director, without any qualifications. In

the good old days, we had to graduate step by step. Today, my driver can become a producer, just by virtue of him being my driver! I am not against people becoming producers, this is a free country and everyone has the right to choose his or her profession, but the ground rules must be established. Or we are all stuck in a quicksand, sinking slowly but surely.

~

At work, Raj Kapoor was exacting, even at the risk of his life. Despite acute breathing problems, aggravated by high altitudes, he was determined to film the Ganga at its source, Gangotri, in the high Himalayas. To shoot at the ice cave of Gomukh, above the Gangotri glacier at an altitude of 4100 metres, Raj Kapoor had to be carried by mountain palanquin bearers. As he said, 'My film is Ganga (the heroine of *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* is named after the river Ganga), my thought is Ganga, so how could I envisage going somewhere else to depict the Ganga just because it is easily accessible? It would not be just cinematic juggling but playing with the faith of millions.'

With Rajiv Kapoor

Even in his early years, Raj Kapoor went to great lengths to achieve the authentic look. To get the cloud patterns right in the last scene of *Shree 420*, where the tramp walks into the sunset, he set out with his unit for Khandala. But nothing was quite right, and the unit carried on, past Khandala and beyond, till they reached Ooty, several hundred kilometres away, with the unit members in their summer clothing shivering in the cold. The shooting that began as a two-hour trip ended after three days. The economics of film-making are difficult to

rationalize. Where does aesthetics stand in the affordability of a trading market? At what point does a performing art become a business? Will an artist abandon his skill if he doesn't make money? If his movies failed at the box office for any reason, Raj Kapoor delivered the next movie with more energy. The commercial success of his film was as important as the aesthetic pleasure. And I see only one reason for that. He strongly believed that he belonged to the nation, that his feelings and dreams were as much his own as they were the entire nation's, and if a movie failed, it meant that he had drifted away from the masses, and he had to recover before it was too late. In other words, failure was not only monetary. He could have probably made more money by compromising his beliefs than by trying to remain loyal to his emotions. In any case, his production values showed in his movies. They were never distractingly lavish and excessive, but they were also never held back for saving pennies. An example is the climax of *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*. It could have been wrapped up inside the studio if he wanted, but the whole point behind the dialogue '*Aisa kahar toh sirf tab aata hai jab kisi farishte ki bad-dua lagti hai*!' would have been missed. And, most importantly, '*Shiv hi sunder hai*' does not only mean a happy basant or sharad ritu. Even the storm and the overwhelming power of Shiv is beautiful. Raj Kapoor must have spent a big part of the budget only on the climax of *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*. Not a good businessman perhaps, but a great artist!

But Raj Kapoor was no traditionalist, unwilling to experiment. 'Show business of the future is in special attractions,' he believed. 'The strange, the unusual, the unique. Too many people are thinking in conventions which are dead.'

While shooting *Barsaat*, for instance, Raj Kapoor was so overwhelmed by the photography of Gregg Toland in Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* that he ordered his cameraman V.N. Reddy, who had photographed his earlier film *Aag*, to use the wide-angle lens extensively. Reddy, an orthodox cameraman, was appalled by the idea of pillars and columns getting shortened, and refused. Finally, Jal Mistry had to be assigned the task of photographing *Barsaat*.

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Will R.K. Studios survive after I am gone? From my viewpoint, I think it should. Daboo is a good administrator, Chintoo is only starting out, but my intuition tells me he will be a good director, and Chimpu will also be a director and a very good one at that. The fate of R.K. Films rests with these three sons of mine. The most difficult performance for an actor is when he is asked to react to a dialogue or situation without speaking. At this time he has to convey everything through his expressions only, and for this it is necessary for his eyes to speak. As a director, you will be sometimes faced with a situation, especially when shooting a dramatic scene, where the silent reaction you require from the actor is not coming across. The way to get over this situation is shoot a close-up of the actor. When your audience watches the film, the sheer magnitude of the shot will be so overpowering

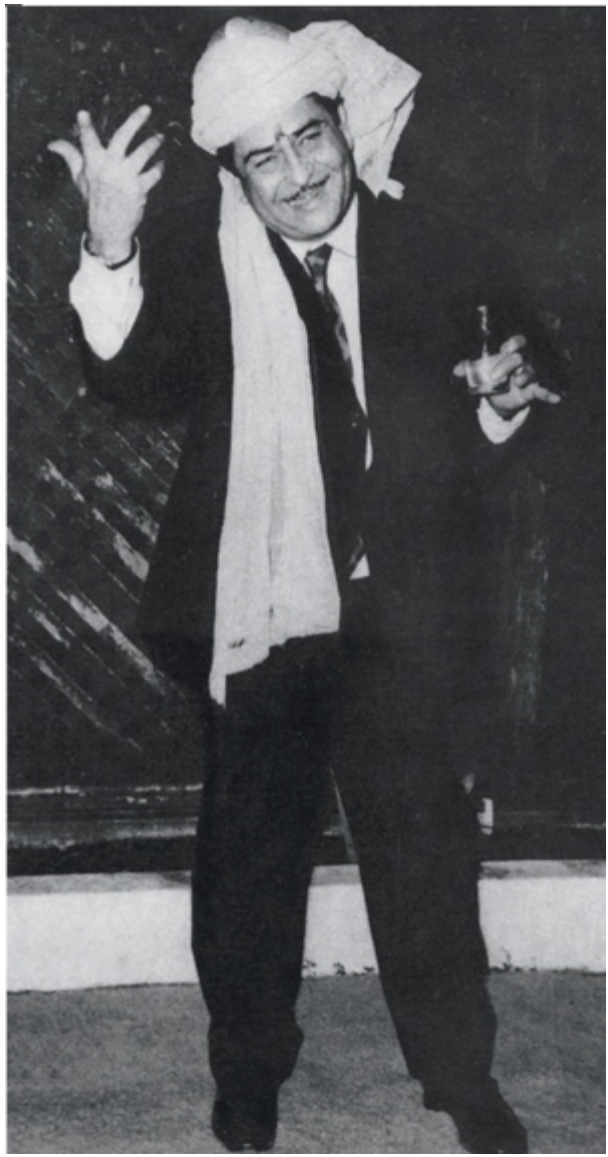
that the audience will get swayed by it. The film medium will always be the limitless and dynamic medium for the creative artist who wishes to use it, provided that he can solve the economic problems involved. The equation of film as 'industry' and film as 'art' remains to be solved by each user. Ultimately it depends on the sincerity of the film-maker. Everyone spends money, but the only thing that comes out clearly in the end is the sincerity of the film-maker himself. The magic is not in the techniques a film-maker uses but in his own vision and the 'filmic expression', which has no man-made restrictions to hinder its shape and size.

With Rajiv, Rishi and Randhir Kapoor

Relaxations

'Animals can only give love, they have no demands. Dogs are more human. What a pity they can't speak!'—Raj Kapoor

'It is tradition to play cards during the festival of Diwali, but my films are my biggest gamble!'



'I am not an alcoholic, I am a drunkard! Some of my best thoughts have occurred to me while I was drinking. It is a blessed thing, a drink.'

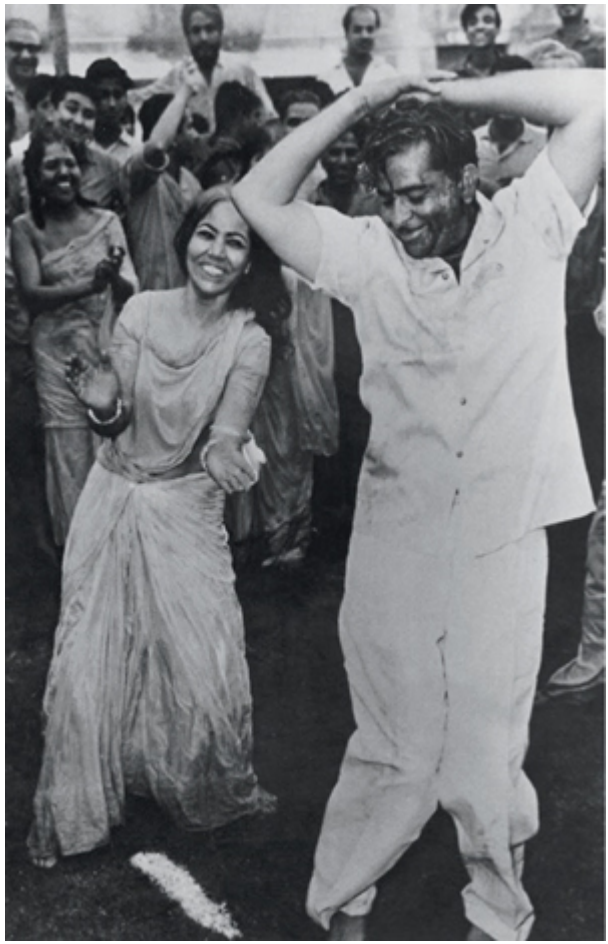
Raj Kapoor was young at heart, and remained so till his last days. His passion for cinema was matched only by his enthusiasm for a game of cricket. In his younger days, he would lead film star teams in fund-raising matches for charitable causes. He would open the bowling—not always with great success, but then, it was the spirit of the game and the entertainment it provided for the audience

that was important to him.

Raj Kapoor loved farming. Raj Bagh (his 100-acre farm in Pune) ‘is the place I will retire to one day’ he often said. ‘There is a curious resemblance between films and farming. A film man’s ideas are like the farmer’s seeds. There is a right time to sow them. Then they germinate. The film-maker has his obstacles, just as the farmer has to watch the skies and a hundred other things. When your film pays you, it pays you bountifully. And so does the earth if it is in a beneficent mood.’

When showman Raj Kapoor celebrated Holi in Bombay's R.K. Studios, the festival of colours always acquired a new meaning. It was star studded every year. As new entrants poured into the industry, people would wait to see which of them were invited on Holi at R.K. Studios. Long ago, when Rekha made a high-profile entry at R.K.'s Holi celebrations, she touched Raj Kapoor's feet and that was all it took. She was accepted into the group of stars.

Celebrating Holi with Amitabh Bachchan



Celebrating Holi with Sitara Devi

Regulars at the R.K. Holi events were Amitabh Bachchan, Manmohan Desai, Kamini Kaushal, Pran, Sanjay Khan, Shatrughan Sinha and Prem Nath. Even when Raj Kapoor's health deteriorated, the Holi festivities continued, until two years before his death in 1988.

'Holi at R.K was always fun, with family and friends. There would be a lot of dancing and singing. A tank was built for the occasion and would be filled with coloured water. As each new guest came in, he was dutifully dunked into the pool. Everyone was dunked into the pool of coloured water, but not the women, of course,' says Krishna Kapoor. 'Women only played with dry colours, and Raj saw to it that no one misbehaved with them. He would take keen interest in the arrangements and was a wonderful host.' Kathak dancer Sitara Devi was one of Raj Kapoor's favourite invitees. She was full of high spirits and would dance and sing. 'In fact, everyone would drink bhang and get drunk. Some men would also drink beer. Only then was he part of the party.'

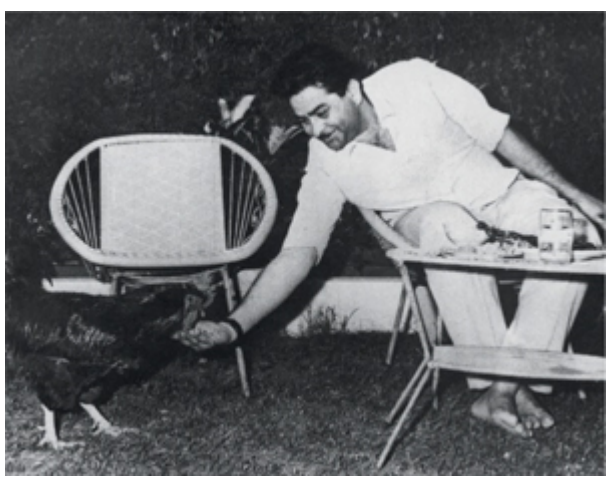
‘Everyone was fed. There was a lot of food, but not a great variety because it was not about eating. The samosas and jalebis from Jhama’s were mouth-watering. The celebrations would start around 11 a.m. and end at about 4 p.m. every year.’ Krishna Raj Kapoor has memories of those days. ‘Jhama’s, the restaurant, used to supply the food for Holi. The R.K. Holi celebrations were famous. There were always gatecrashers at those events. Co-stars and crew from Raj Kapoor’s films were all there. Caste and religion never mattered. People of all castes came. It wasn’t about my festival or your festival. It was a huge gathering each year with everyone mingling, dancing and singing. Raj Kapoor was in the best of moods when he played host and he would dance too. He was particularly fond of music. He would play the dholak and dance.’

Cooking was Raj Kapoor’s favourite way to relax. He often quoted a Punjabi saying, ‘*Khao dal jedi nibhe naal*,’ which means that one could eat the fanciest

food in the world, but at the end of the day, a simple, well-cooked dal was the best fare. The Kapoor passion for delicious food matched their roving eye for beautiful women but all this contributed to their all-consuming passion for film-making. Strangely enough he would love to have various dishes laid out on the table but he only nibbled at the food. He did not devour food, he merely tasted it. He would have his dining table well laid out.

Raj Kapoor knew about good food available in various cities of the world. Once, his distributor J.P. Chowksey travelled with him, to a city called Sagar. Raj Kapoor asked Chowksey to organize trotters from a restaurant in Bhopal. 'I had asked my man Rashid Khan, in Bhopal, to get trotters. We were supposed to reach Ramson Hotel, Bhopal, latest by 10 p.m. Raj Kapoor cared for traditions and had eaten only vegetarian food for two days and remained without any alcohol also. He stopped the car at a convenient place by the roadside and John, his valet, spread a sheet. We started drinking. A truck stopped and the driver came to pay his regards to Raj Kapoor who asked him to join in. Another truck driver brought a dholak and Raj Kapoor played it deftly. He sang and danced with the truck drivers and it was like a night "*chaand taron ke tale, raat yeh gaati chale*". This impromptu party lasted long and we reached Ramson at 4 a.m. He demanded trotters but my man had gone. Raj Kapoor kept grumbling and refused to eat anything. We reached Bombay at noon and I had barely reached my abode at Warden Road when I was summoned to Devnar Cottage, his residence in Chembur. I had apprehensions, but when I reached there, a smiling Raj Kapoor welcomed me warmly and asked me to eat trotters with him. His laughter was pure and had no sarcasm but it was like a prank played by a child. The third and final episode of the trotter saga took place in Hyderabad years later. We had gone there to attend the international film festival. I was staying at a two-star hotel, Savera, in Secunderabad. One night, I was awoken and informed that Raj Kapoor was waiting for me in the lobby. He took me to some lane and we landed in a small restaurant known for its delicious trotters. Raj Kapoor laughed uproariously with neither rancour nor malice. It was his way of enjoying life fully.'

Keeping fowls was one of Raj Kapoor's hobbies and part of his daily routine was to feed them, calling out 'Aa, aa, aa'. He often used the same tone jokingly to call his grandchildren. He would give names to each of his fowls. Even after he died, one of his hens continued to lay eggs on his bed for quite some time!

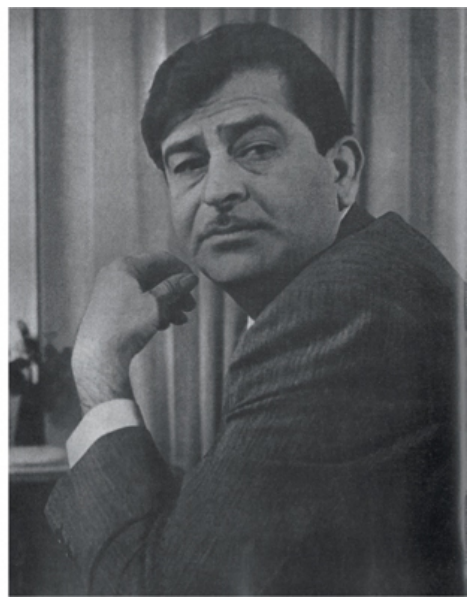


Reflections

'What is it, after all, that a man wants? Money, position and success ... all are secondary. The basic thing is tomorrow: the knowledge and promise that tomorrow will be better than today. Nothing else matters.'—Raj Kapoor

If films are about storytelling, Raj Kapoor was an exception. The story of any Raj Kapoor film happens somewhere between the scenes. The plots and events are so simple and obvious that it is less of a story and more of a narrative. He would

build a universe, while the smaller worlds built themselves on the way. I do not see how the labels fiction or non-fiction can be applied to Raj Kapoor's movies. If I called any of them fiction, the same emotional upheavals were happening in the world around us … if I call any of them non-fiction, there was so much drama, music and passion which was not visible outside the theatre! He was not called the Greatest Showman for nothing. Here I must mention something I noted in all his films. In every one of them, there is at least one or more scenes which he does entirely for his own pleasure. As if he doesn't care about anything or anyone else at that moment. I'll give a few examples: The scene in *Mera Naam Joker*, when the Russian girl waves him a goodbye and asks him to settle down, cut to the plane taxiing on the runway, Mukesh's voice in the background and a song from *Awara*. That scene was not about the story, it was about himself—his body, mind and soul presented to us—with the pride of an honest man who has nothing to save for himself. Another example is in *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*. A tense situation is created where Zeenat's character is pregnant and Shashi's character has no reason to believe that the child belongs to him. The scene moves logically, Shashi dragging her out of the house, swearing at her father's claim that the daughter is cultured, and just when it seems done, Lata's voice arises in the background, '*Satya beej hai, ankur hai Shiv, sunder roop hazaara, daya karo prabhu, ho na kalankit, yeh vardaan tumhara, Radha Mohan sharanam, Satyam Shivam Sundaram*'. Only Raj Kapoor could have used a moment like that to repeat the theme. One more. We know Raj Kapoor had a special liking for '*Danube Waves*'; from *Aag* to *Bobby*, every movie has the tune at the most romantic moments. But *Bobby* needs a special mention. It was not the usual Raj Kapoor movie, the underlying theme and story were not all his own, they were quintessential K.A. Abbas—the contest between a socialist worker and a capitalist wealth manager, the teenage romance was racy and less emotive than all of R.K.'s previous works. The usual nationalist fever was conspicuous by its absence, a younger nation had taken over, but that is not my point. The point is that despite all the freshness of *Bobby*, Raj Kapoor overrules everything else at moments that are most dear to him. Two instances in the movie—first when Rishi Kapoor knocks on the door of Dimple's home and she appears on the screen for the first time, '*Danube Waves*' opens with the door as if on cue, for a fleeting moment one expects Nargis to appear from somewhere. And the second is when Pran and Prem Nath are in the former's house, one hoping to arrange the marriage and another hoping to buy his way out of it. All goes as per standard operating procedure—girl's father is humble, boy's father is searching for words to humiliate the other. As it reaches the point of real attrition and Pran says, '*Aur jaisa phanda aapne daala hai…*' the scene cuts to Rishi's bedroom. Dimple swings her dupatta around his neck and guess what, the '*Danube Waves*' begins! Took me by complete surprise. How can anyone be so honest? Did he not know that it was for the whole world to see? Did he care? I don't know, maybe he did care, and maybe he also trusted us to understand him, that humanity is not about our differences, it is about what we have in common.



His direction was not limited to the scenes. It was also evident in the background music, the songs, the editing and every aspect of the film. Almost as if he signed every moment in the film with his personality.

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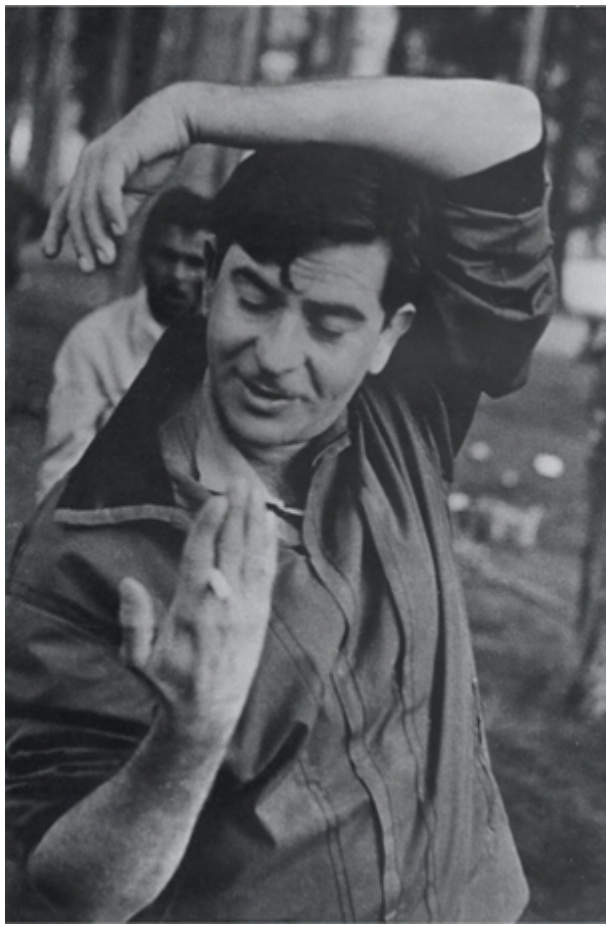
Right from my first film, I have played deglamourized roles, I have never tried to be the handsome blue-eyed lover. That was how I felt best, and that gradually led me to the 'little man'. Spiritually I felt very happy with that, more so in a country like India. There are, even now, millions and millions of 'little men' on footpaths, in huts, everywhere.

What really hurts me is to see people, many of whom profess to be my friends, trying to deceive me, smugly thinking that they can get away with it. Of course they do, because I allow them to. I pretend not to understand, when actually I keep track of everything!

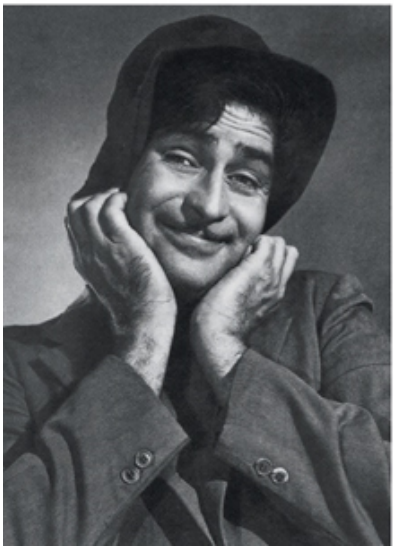
Cinema is cinema! Psychologically, cinema alone involves its audience. How long can you watch the tube? Television at home is just you and your family but when you go to the cinema, you have a lot of people all around you, and you come to a common level of application. You denounce the action or revel in it, but it is a common feeling among you. You enjoy it, you laugh, you clap and the whole hall is laughing. When you feel wronged and cheated, the whole hall feels cheated. Now that is a very different kind of feeling. That is why the Americans, the biggest film-makers at one time, have never had a golden period in show business like they have had of late, even though they have thirty TV channels there.

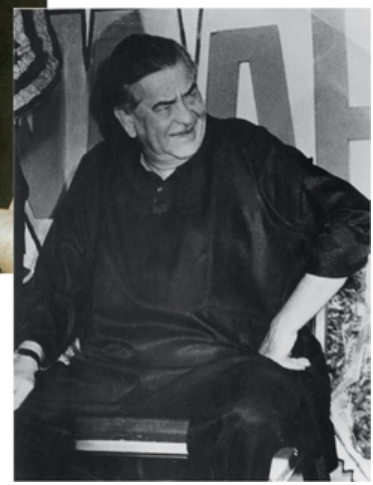
It seemed as if my own shadow was watching me, seeing everything in terms of shots, with all the wipes, dissolves, fade-ins, cuts, everything telescoped into a mass of unedited celluloid scripts, caught by the camera's unblinking eye, in the tireless gaze of life's arc

lamps. Today each associate has gone his separate way after his own personal mirage and I find myself standing again, as it were, on the threshold of a fresh phase of my life.



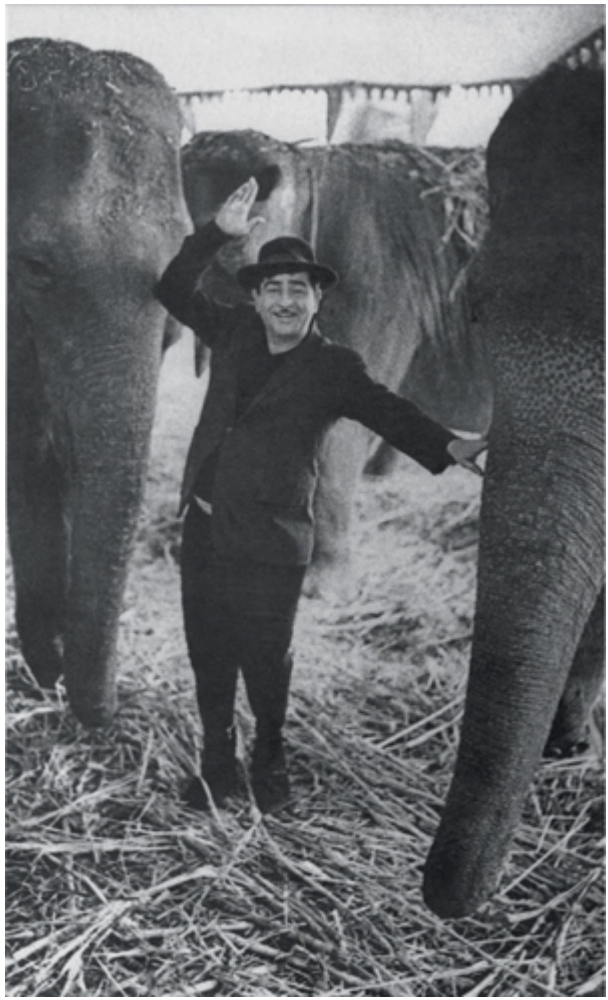
I have at times worked seventy-two hours non-stop. There is something within you that is the energy, power, vitality. You have to do it, so you do it. At other times, I have lazed, just slept like a pumpkin or a bum. I am a man of few diversions. Work, work and more work—that has always been my life. When I am not at work on a film, I am brooding over my work in that film. That is why occasions such as the celebration of a birthday afford me a rare break from the steadfastness of my dedication to work. It recharges me, makes me whole and new again.



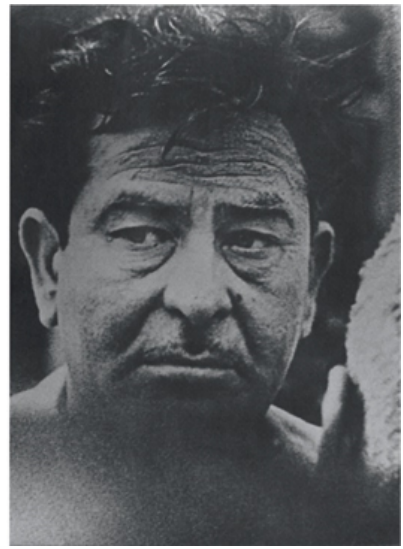


There is a party on the lawns of my residence at night. People come—colleagues from the industry, friends from within and outside the industry. It acts as my contact with the outside world again. I see fun and laughter. I listen to the stories they tell. I am happy to see all of them happy. And the morning after, yet another birthday has passed. I am embarking now on my own, a new year. It is a time for the reaffirmation of my faith—reaffirmation of my faith in my work, that is of prime importance. Reaffirmation of my faith also in the people, the great Indian people, whom it is our life's mission to entertain,

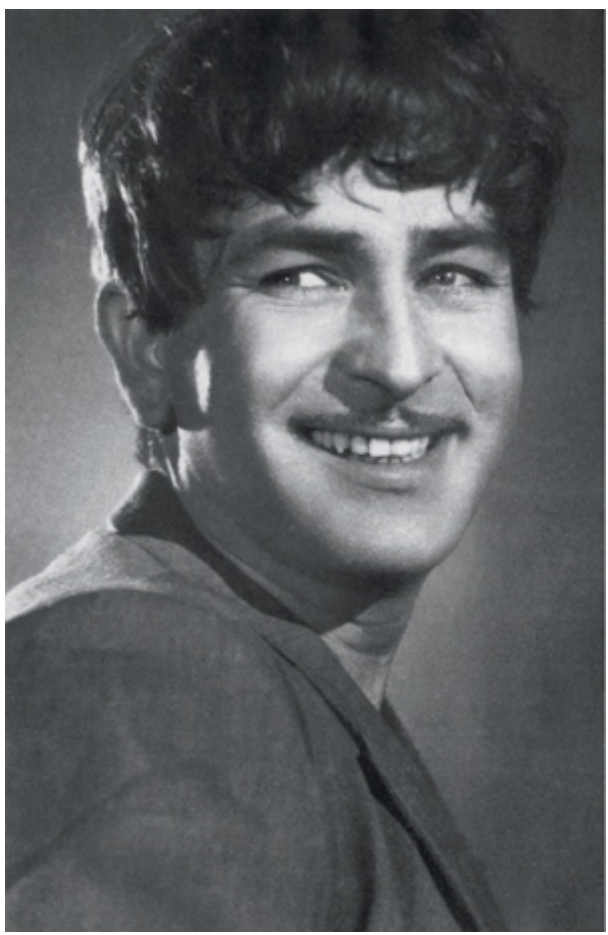
to make happy and, if possible, also in the process to enlighten.



There is nothing in this world except love. The more you spread or give it, the more it expands. The more you accept love, the stronger it becomes. The more you coax love, the better and greater you become. There are many forms of love. If you make it narrow, it becomes selfish. Selfish love can benefit a person but he loses his significance.



I am an incurable romantic. I am in love with the concept of love. It is a part of my personality. It's my individuality. That is why I make films about intense love. Films like *Prem Rog*. You see, very few people are fortunate enough to get genuine love. And even more rarely does the love acquire true intensity and become a rog. When it does, it is incurable. That's when the lover cannot differentiate between God and his beloved. I can't help it if everything about me is described in terms of romance. The feeling I try to project on screen is genuine, always pure and straight from the heart. I want my audience not only to see romance visually, but to feel it—the visual must be very beautiful. The girl must be beautiful. The boy must be beautiful. Beauty is the soul of every frame. The audience must love the girl and the boy. If it does not, it won't feel for them. I am not concerned with the kind of love that wallows in its own grief. I tried that once in my film *Aah* and failed miserably. I am concerned with love that is beautiful and sublime. Yes, sometimes it is just out of reach. But that is what makes it interesting. That is where the suspense comes in. Will he get her? Won't he get her? Of course, he has to get her. My audience can't go back disappointed. My credo is that to achieve 'success' in love is very important. I don't believe that it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.



No matter whose film it is, it complements and supplements the rest of the film-makers of the industry. Whether it is mine or it is Subhash Ghai's or whether it was, in the past, Mr Shantaram's or Mr Mehboob's—economically, each great and successful film in some way helped every producer and everybody in the film industry. Today when we face great competition from the numerous gadgets and forms of media that have cropped up, it really goes to the credit of the very generous, the very kind and gracious, appreciating audience of this country which has made it possible for *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* to celebrate its golden jubilee! I thank all my technicians, my colleagues, may they also celebrate such jubilees and may we congregate again to wish one another in the trade happy going despite all the televisions and all the video cassettes and all the pilfering and pirating. Cinema will always exist.

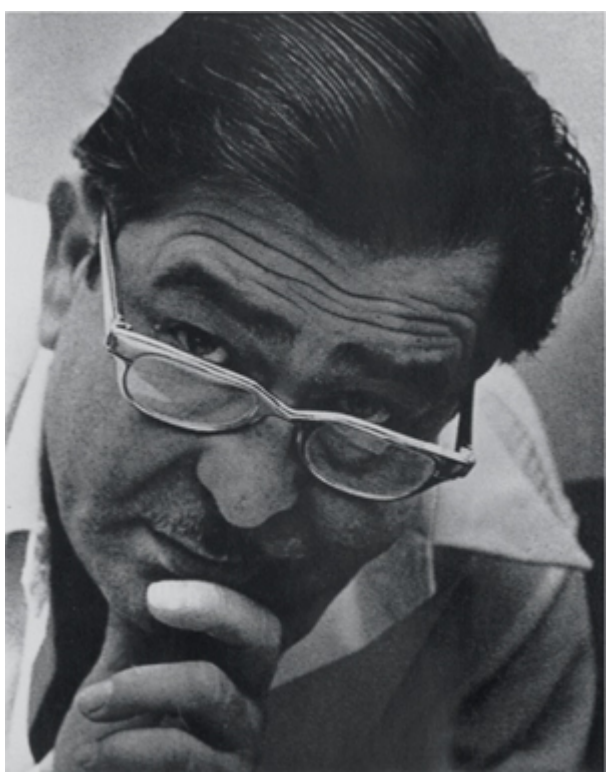
You can't separate Raj Kapoor the director and actor from Raj Kapoor the man. The man is important. As a man, to me, love has always been a very special emotion. I don't mean love as it is understood in a relationship between man and woman. There is another kind of love which comes to a lucky few, once in a lifetime, like a glorious spectrum, a vast area of belonging. You know why I am so preoccupied with love? It is because I've had a lot of it since childhood. I was loved by my mother, my teachers and friends. I seem to have had more than my share of it because of my fair skin and blue eyes! I was loved and I loved in return. I loved people, things, places, flowers, hills, everything around me. I think love is a great unifying force in creativity. Even in the world of business, love can do wonders. You can't negotiate with hate, can you? Today, I look around and see our contemporary films in which the predominant emotions are anger, hate, violence, vengeance and bitterness. My films have always dealt with love and all that surrounds it. In the evolution of love, there is revolution.

People write diaries, I write screenplays. My life is like a script, every incident, each stray remark, flash of colour, sound and footfall is branded on my memory. Before anybody can have confidence in you, you need to have it within yourself. Respect yourself, no matter what you do, and you must enjoy whatever work you do, small or large. Always work towards what you believe in, and the day you start converting your beliefs into passions is the day you will start fulfilling your dreams. I make a film to please me first. If it pleases me, I feel there is a good chance it will please others. But it has to please me first.

The films we all are making today! I am particularly talking about the so-called popular cinema. When we made films, they were also popular, they were very popular, not only in our country but all over the world. But with those films you also said a lot. You had something to show, something to tell the world. We had directions from our leaders, from thinkers, poets, writers, and that inspired many of us to make such films. Through them we portrayed India: this is our culture, this is our music, and this is our struggle and this is what we want to achieve. Unfortunately, a conscientious film-maker today stands at a crossroads, not knowing which path to take. There is no positive direction. There are so many pitfalls. And that is the reason why most of us are making escapist fare or just imitating. It is not taking us anywhere. But I know the time will come again, and shortly. I may not be there to make it, but there are going to be people who will make that cinema

that will reach and touch millions in our country and all over the world.

Our people are gracious and kind. They go to all the trouble to go to a cinema, stand in long queues and procure a ticket. They go through the hustle and bustle, through the blazing sun and the thrashing rain, to see your film, and—as I have always said—if you do not cheat the audience, they are very kind to you. Don't make fools of them. Do not take them for granted. They may not be as intelligent or as critical as other audiences, but they know why they have come there to the theatre, they know: they want to be entertained.



Films are my life, my benediction, the very breath of my soul. Over the years, I have grown to realize that I could not have known this beautiful world as I have done if I hadn't been making films. I realize that my whole existence is nothing but what little I know through cinema, through people. Human beings, relationships, pain, sorrow, joy, happiness, so many things, all through cinema. My films and I! To me it is the same as saying, my beloved and I, or my life's breath and I, or my purpose and I. To me my films are all these rolled into one, perhaps more!

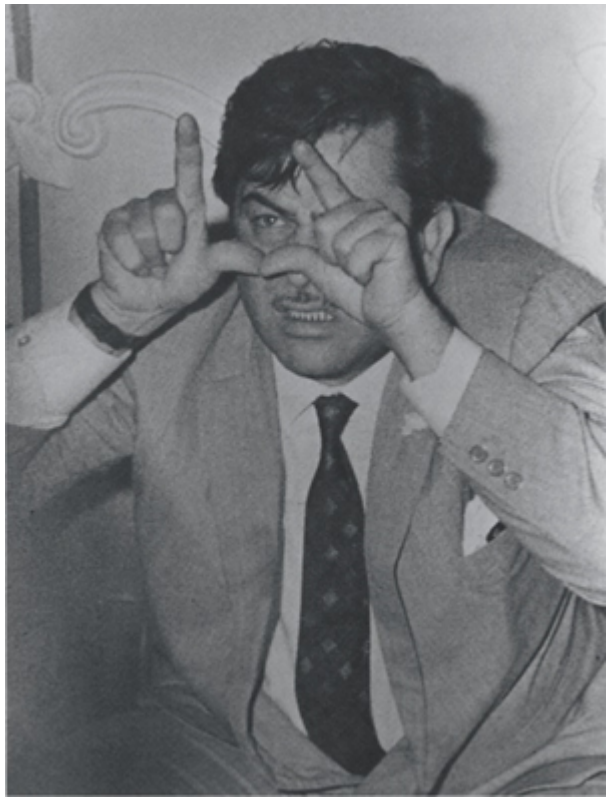
Making a film is like selling a dream. The man in the audience sees the hero beating up twenty people and he jumps with joy. He identifies with the hero and finds an outlet for his own pent-up frustrations. He buys their dream. I sell dreams too but I sell visions of love sublime. This is the basic difference. Theirs is a cinema of hatred, mine is a cinema of love. I have always directed the moods of the actors and not the scene or the script.

Look at yourself in the mirror and see if you love the image. If you love yourself, the world will love you. There is a saying that human beings come into this world and go out of it naked. As for me, I even live in it naked. I have nothing to hide, everything to reveal.

I am not a Hindu because I was born into a Hindu family. I have inherited a great philosophy and I am part of that universal consciousness which is called Hinduism. But I have a universe of my own, I am in complete control of it and several worlds exist in my own universe. I am an eternal joker and making human beings laugh is my religion. I am the traveller who comes but once. I dance and sing to fill your hearts with joy and then I go away, knowing that you have had a hearty laugh.

Laughter is the best medicine. Laugh, and the world laughs with you, weep, and you weep alone. As a child, it was my ambition to follow in the footsteps of my father and entertain people. There is nothing nobler in life than to entertain people.

I am no politician. I am an artiste. I belong to a country where people are sentimental, emotional about their basic strength, which is their faith. It is ingrained within us. It is unfortunate that this observation, for whatever it is worth, should be clubbed with a kind of celebration that has nothing to do with it. What we have come here to celebrate is the independence of this country. I think that the greatest force behind this independence was and is the participation of the Sikh race. This martial race from Punjab fought for and sacrificed people to gain independence. So, it is painful to hear that the day you should remember the sacrifice of brothers, sisters, sons, you make it a political issue and use this as a forum to voice your grievances. I don't think that this should be done. This day is when we put aside our grievances and just remember one thing—what our forefathers did, how they behaved with the one vital force that was unity. We know that our country is diverse. So many religions, so many castes, provinces, languages. Yet we are one. We have been one. There is no reason for any force to cut through, to disintegrate a country and a people who have been one. That unity has been our true spirituality. And we use this platform to divide? It is very unfortunate if a thing like this happens. But I am sure it will not, because 15 August, which we shall celebrate, is a day when you shed all your grievances and shout with one voice that we are Indians. We will celebrate our independence together, each one of us, no matter if he is a Punjabi, or a Sikh or a Muslim or a Hindu or a Parsi, a south Indian or a north Indian. I am sure my brothers and sisters of the great Khalsa tradition will understand this fact and not try to disrupt this great national day that is being celebrated.



We, in this part of the world, have been manufacturing entertainment for millions. I am also one amongst the many who has contributed to bringing together a lot of people in this country. There is communalism and now there is so-called terrorism—everyone claiming his land. What land? Whose is it? Ours! There is so much that we can do by making entertaining films, with these issues in the background. We can reach millions of people who today are ignorant about these things, and create a consciousness and awareness. This is what we try to achieve. How far have we been successful? I can only say that in a diverse country like India, cinema has been one very vital force in bringing the east, west, south and north together, to help its people know something about one another, and I hope this has been a great contribution.

Most of my life's passions, my fondest hopes have gone into my work and at the end of each film the result invariably is that I feel lonely. Thank God, I have not studied too much. Thank God, I am not bookish. Thank God, I am not literate. Thank God, I am a fool or a buffoon. I am just simple and down to earth so that I can identify and feel for the other one. I can smile with him; I can share his pain and I can share his joy, both, sitting on the footpath.

This sensitivity within me has led me to beautiful human beings. The beautiful things I saw in them, I accepted, and the ugly things I just discarded. In youth, this romanticism

and sensitivity both go together. If you want to love, you must be sensitive. You cannot be in love if you are insensitive.

Many people have asked why I have music, soap operas, a hotch-potch of everything in my films. To whom am I catering? I am not making films for drawing-room conversation. I am making films to entertain the millions of this country. So, I have my music, I have romanticism, a beautiful script, dancing, nice visuals and there we are! All is well and everybody is happy and God is great! Cinema is the only medium which reaches millions of people at the same time, and that is the reason why I try and make films which millions can see. You may call it popular cinema, call it any kind of cinema, but as long as it reaches millions of people in my country, and if I can give them something to think about, to sing about, to laugh about, I think I have done my job.

Why is it so painful to understand oneself? There have been great people who have tried to—Lord Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, Lord Krishna, Lord Ram. They were kind people who, from their own pain, came to identify themselves with the suffering people in this world, giving them happiness, trying to soothe them. I think what they probably realized is that everybody is pained. So, we have to cure this, just as we have to when there is disease. How do we cure disease? There is a diagnosis, there is medicine which soothes. What is there that one shall apply to pain? There is love, there is affection, there is kindness.

The artistic fire that was ignited years ago is still burning within me, rather it burns fiercer and brighter. I am basically an entertainer and a showman. I give the dressed-up version of a message to my public. I don't understand this new wave that has come into

the industry. And I don't like the way some people use the word 'commercial' cinema. Cinema is a medium for the masses, not for drawing-room conversation. What is entertainment? To one it may be a beautiful song or a dance, to another it might be an intellectual play, a drama or something that gives him satisfaction; he identifies with the situation or with an actor. To some it might just be a means to vent his pent-up emotions: he sees a fight and he feels that as the hero he has knocked down about fifty people with one blow, he claps and shouts and yells and says, 'A lovely film, a lovely film.' That film might not have anything, but it gave him satisfaction, made him happy and made him forget about the daily problems that he confronts. For a moment, he has forgotten everything else, he enjoys himself. Now, that is entertainment!

When I look around today, I see so much corruption. You feel that people are becoming increasingly crude and vulgar. They seem to have no values. The basic strengths, truthfulness, loyalty, what we considered the gems of humanity, don't exist at all. There is something wrong with the whole system. I don't profess to be a moralist or a reformist. I am not a preacher or a philosopher or an intellectual. I am just a man saying what I feel.

Hindu philosophy defines the stages of life: *bachpan* (childhood), *brahmacharya* (youth), *grahastha* (household), *vanaprastha* (detachment) and then sanyas (salvation). I am in my vanaprastha stage, where nothing affects me. I am detached from the worldly way of life. I have been able to do what I believe in. I am still doing what I believe in, and I feel that I have come nearer to people, where I wanted to be, to dwell in their hearts. I want to achieve that.

Some years ago, when I was shooting for some film, an American journalist came to interview me. The interview turned into a discussion on religious philosophy and 'the philosophy of the joker'. Then I said, the world's greatest men were jokers. Christ was a great joker. So were Buddha and Gandhi. The journalist looked totally bewildered. So, I explained. Of course, Christ was a joker. When someone slapped him on one cheek, he offered the other. People laughed at him, not realizing how much truth lay beneath what he said and what he did. You see, he was so ahead, not only of his times but of the people he attempted to show the light to. In his own time, he was laughed at, just like Buddha and Gandhi were derided, but the world that came to scoff stayed on to revere. These men had hearts large enough to hold all the world's love, all the world's suffering, all the world's agony and pain and loneliness and sacrifice. And that is the character of the joker. His heart is the crucible to transmute all the world's pain into the laughter on his face and the joke on his lips. Beneath all the fun and frolic, beneath all the showmanship and spectacle, beneath all the jokes and laughter, all the breathtaking canvas of circus and magic, song and dance, music and miming, there lies the deep emotionalism and humanism of the eternal 'little man', the Christ in the garb of the clown whose mission is to spread happiness and joy, laughter and peace, at his own expense. There lies the saga of the 'little man', the joker who bore the cross of sorrow and misery on his shoulders and always

preached the gospel of peace and love for the eternal benefit of mankind.

Lack of funds is a curse in the film industry but excess funds is a greater curse. People tend to make more films and creativity is destroyed. Contact with the people is the most precious prize in the life of the entertainer. It is a contact which is constantly renewed each time one makes a film.

A film is not made to sit and see within the four walls of your own home. It is made with a message for people and each time you make a film you must part with a precious portion of your being for the people. Nothing fake or counterfeit will do because nothing except your sincerity counts. The audience, which sits in a theatre to see your film, can feel it pulsating or missing. That is why I pour my heart and soul into each and every film I make.

A film-maker is like a conductor at a concert. He doesn't compose the tune and he doesn't play the instruments. Yet, when he comes, the musicians stand up. A true film-maker should be respected as much as a great literary writer, because he has the power to influence the thinking of the people along the right lines. He should be respected as a nation builder as much as a great politician and a statesman is.

Beyond India

'Awara was my little contribution to the USSR-India friendship.'—Raj Kapoor

Raj Kapoor's Awara showing at a theatre in Moscow

Visit to the USSR

After World War II, the Soviet Union under Stalin had closed its doors to the outside world, having regimented its society, trying to build up its economy and enforce its system of authoritative communism amongst the fourteen republics that formed the Soviet Union. In 1954, for the first time, it lifted the Iron Curtain and allowed visitors from the outside world. The movie industry in India was asked by the Soviet ministry of culture to send a delegation of prominent and popular movies stars to hobnob with their counterparts in the USSR, to gain first-hand knowledge of the goings-on in that forbidden part of the world. Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, with his leftist leanings, was asked to select and head a fourteen-member delegation to travel to the USSR as state guests, to acquaint itself with the Soviet Union's experiments with communism. Raj Kapoor was chosen as one of its members. It was a historic trip.

The people of the Soviet Union were used to seeing films that were made by their ministry of culture, on themes and subjects that needed to be propagated by the state to further its ideology. Anything from outside that could influence them to the contrary was strictly prohibited and banned if necessary. For the first time, like a waft of fresh breeze, escapist Indian music and dance extravaganzas and love fantasies found their way into their theatres, and the Soviets pounced upon them with the joy of a child in wonderland. They filled the theatres and sang our songs, and followed our movie stars and moviemakers like teenage autograph hunters. With *Awara*, which soon became something of a cult phenomenon, Raj Kapoor became the most popular figure in the country.

The song '*Awara hoon*' was on everyone's lips, being sung everywhere as if it was the national anthem of the country. In 1954, the year after Stalin's death, under the so-called Khrushchev thaw, there was suddenly a new freedom in the media and arts in the USSR. In that year alone, a stunning sixty-four million people, mainly young, are estimated to have bought tickets to *Awara*. 'Kapoor mania', as it was called in the USSR, became ever more frantic with his next film, *Shree 420*, the following year. Soviets did not require Marxist solutions in their films. There was plenty of that on the state-run radio.

They celebrated the songs, which become ubiquitous on the airwaves, and bought postcards with Raj Kapoor's image which are collector's items to this day. They made the young hero who pursued his desires against social traditions their own. Wherever the delegation went, there was a demand for Raj Kapoor to sing his song, and he sang it whole-heartedly, playing to the gallery, sitting on a piano stool, with glasses of vodka being offered to him from all sides, as his own glass of whisky lay empty on the piano, waiting to be refilled. As he sang, men and women participated in the song, dancing and screaming and reeling with drunken delight. On Nehru's first prime ministerial visit to the Soviet Union in 1955, the crowds that had turned out to see him shouted out to the Indian leader, '*Awara hoon*!' Bulganin was the Soviet Premier then. At the official banquet for the visiting Indian Prime Minister, Bulganin, when it was his turn to speak after Nehru, sang '*Awara hoon*'!

Raj Kapoor with Yuri Gagarin, the first-man in space

Raj Kapoor and Nargis with Nikolay Cherkassov (actor) and Vsevolod Pudovkin (director), 1954

Raj Kapoor commanded such a following that the Russians often asked Indians who visited their land, long after the delegation had left their shores, 'Are you from the land of *Awara*?' Even the ex-Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru developed a Raj Kapoor complex when he heard and saw the popularity of the Indian movie star wherever he went.

There were many more enthusiastic young vagabonds, in East Africa, Romania, Egypt, Afghanistan, Iran, the Middle East and China. Chairman Mao was a Raj Kapoor fan too! In Turkey, *Awara* was made into a popular television show; '*Awara hoon*' still matters enough to inspire a hip-hop version.

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The first time I went beyond the so-called Iron Curtain, to the Soviet world, was in 1954. I was fortunate to have been invited. It was a revelation altogether. The Soviet Union had a large film industry, but more than that, what was staggering was the people and the welcome of millions and their love. My popularity in Russia is a phenomenon I can't explain myself, except that my films *Awara* and *Shree 420* came at an opportune moment, when the Russian people were changing themselves culturally. In these films, they saw the spirit of the Indian youth in revolt and they loved him, as he became the symbol of their own spirit. This identity with the Indian youth that I portrayed drew us closer. Our friendship has been a longstanding one. Even today I get a warm welcome from them. The people in the Soviet Union liked *Awara* tremendously, and liked my work. They gave me a lot of affection which I feel till today, twenty-eight years later! I am deeply honoured, but I do not take all the credit for myself. This love and affection that they have given to the

vagabond, awara, or to my work, was symbolically to the youth of India at that time. That lovable awara was seeking and searching for love, affection and friendship and whoever held out his hand to him, he took it. This was my little contribution to the USSR-India friendship. In Moscow, the first words we heard were: 'Dear friends, comrades'. After hearing these simple but important words, it was not necessary to study any more of the Russian language. We've always said that if we call somebody a friend, he is a friend forever.

In my first experience of going abroad (as a film-maker), I learnt and gained a lot from the people that we met. We went right within, into the core of their hearts, and they opened their doors to tell us what we wanted to know. I spoke little but I kept my ears and eyes open to anything and everything I could hear or see.

Visit to the USA

At the joint invitation of the United States State Department and the Motion Picture Association of America, in September 1952, fourteen top-ranking personalities of the Indian motion picture industry went to the United States for a four-week, eight-city tour of the country, including a visit to Hollywood.

By Raj Kapoor's own admission, when he first visited America as a member of the Indian film delegation in 1952, he was totally unknown. Even when the world in our half of the globe was lionizing him and hailing him as a great film-maker by the time he had released *Awara*, Americans neither knew nor apparently cared to know about him or his work. However, what was not destined to happen to Raj Kapoor in the 1950s eventually did happen in the 1980s. The National Film Development Corporation and the Directorate of Film Festivals, Delhi, in association with the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) and the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York, had a retrospective of Raj Kapoor's films in New York and Los Angeles in 1985. Geoffrey Gilmore, the director of programming at the UCLA Film, Audio and Television Archives, and Adrienne Mancia, the curator at the department of film at MOMA, who were knowledgeable about Indian cinema, were very keen to have Raj Kapoor as their guest of honour at the inauguration of the Festival of India in New York. They got Raj Kapoor to agree to come, and when, because of frequently recurring ill health, he sent them a cable calling off his trip, Adrienne Mancia shot back a cable to R.K. Studios demanding: 'Who can replace Raj Kapoor? It has to be Raj Kapoor or no one!' This not only amused Raj Kapoor but also gratified him considerably, and he made the trip to the USA.

Raj Kapoor with an Indian delegation, seen with President Truman, in Washington at a welcome hosted by the American film industry.

Raj Kapoor with American film director and writer Gabriel Pascal and his wife (1952).

George Sidney, President of the Screen Directors' Guild, awards Raj Kapoor the citation of the Guild (1952).

At the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum as guests of the Association of Motion Producers to witness a football game between Rice University of Texas and the University of California. The visitors were saluted with a card reproduction of the flower of India and welcomed in their native language over the public-address system. William Lundigan, George Murphy and Ronald Reagan (then President of the Screen Actors Guild and later President of the USA) escorted them to the game (1952).

Presenting a gift from India to Jack L. Warner, vice president in charge of production, Warner Bros. In turn, Raj Kapoor received a key to the Warner Bros. Studios (1952).

Raj Kapoor welcomed to Columbia Studios by Ely Levy, Head of the International Department and member of the Association of Motion Picture Producers of America (1952)

Raj Kapoor addressing a crowd on Independence Day in New York

I am grateful to all of you for giving me an opportunity to celebrate the Independence of India on American soil, in New York, with Indians and the people of America—a day that we all as citizens, children of India, commemorate with great pride. We have given lives to gain this freedom and it is now our responsibility to preserve and strengthen it. India and its people only champion one thing, and that is peace, peace and friendship among nations and the people of the world. We are Indians and we are united despite all our diverse religions. Every country has its problems, but on this day of Independence, there is happiness for all and we are one.'

Raj Kapoor and Nargis with American actor and entertainer Danny Kaye

Conductor Zubin Mehta recalls how once in Los Angeles he had asked American star Danny Kaye, a great friend and a phenomenal cook, to prepare a meal for Raj Kapoor. Zubin had impressed on Raj Kapoor that Danny was a stickler for punctuality, but when he arrived to pick up the guests he found that they were not ready. 'Krishna has not seen the moon!' said Raj Kapoor to the horrified Zubin. He went on to explain, 'Today is a religious fast undertaken once a year by a wife in the husband's honour, and before she can break her fast, she must sight the moon.' They drove halfway to the Pacific Ocean when one of them providentially caught sight of the moon and pointed it out to Krishna. Then they raced off to Danny Kaye's house. Despite Zubin's efforts, they were twenty-five minutes late. As was to be expected, the expression on Danny's face, when they entered, was not exactly one of welcome. As far as he was concerned, his pasta was ruined. It took Raj Kapoor only ten minutes to win Danny Kaye over completely, especially when the host saw how much his food was appreciated. They parted as dear friends, and there was not a time when Zubin Mehta met Danny Kaye that the latter did not ask about the great man from India.

With Charlie Chaplin (1955)

On our way to the Soviet Union, we stopped for a couple of days in Geneva, before taking a flight to Prague, then the capital of communist Czechoslovakia, from where a Soviet aircraft would fly the delegation to Moscow. Charles Chaplin at that time had settled down in Switzerland, near Monteux, after having been dubbed a leftist by the American government and asked to leave the country for his involvement in un-American activities. He had acquired a palatial mansion a few hours' drive from Geneva, which he called his white house, having made it look like the exterior of the American presidential palace, thus getting his own back at the American government. The leader of our delegation, K.A. Abbas, had sought a meeting with the great comedian, who had agreed to meet us for an informal chat over cups of coffee in his villa. We all looked forward to a meeting with the great legend.

Chaplin welcomed us to his house. He escorted us all through the main hall of his elegant villa, out into the portico, in front of the lush green lawns that looked out over a very picturesque Swiss valley. Every time a tourist bus passed that landmark, the conductor of the bus pointed out the famous Chaplin mansion with glee and pride. In a corner of the main hall that we crossed, on our way to the portico, sat a piano, with a very elegantly dressed lady playing it. She casually nodded hello to us as she played. I guessed she must be Chaplin's latest wife Oona, daughter of the famous playwright Eugene O'Neill. A toddler, evidently her daughter from Charlie, was reclining on her knees. The sonata that she played set the background for our meeting with the great philosopher comedian. We squatted around him on the grassy ground as he reclined in his easy chair. He

spoke of the philosophy of his life, the humour he brought to his films, of romance, of poetry, of affluence, of his disillusionment with America, to which he said he had given the best years of his life. He was ready to answer all that we wanted to know. Papa literally sat at his feet. An ardent disciple, he had consciously or subconsciously been following Chaplin's style as an actor. The three intimate hours we spent with 'Charlie' were as good as reading all his biographies written the world over. The goodbye kiss he blew us when he saw us off at the front door of his villa stayed with us through the rest of the trip. We carried his aura with us on our trip to the world of communism we were about to visit. As the bus taking us back to Geneva drove and took a turn, taking the diminutive figure of the giant of an artist, thinker and comedian away from view, Raj Kapoor was heard shouting again and again: 'Goodbye little fellow, goodbye little fellow, goodbye little fellow,' as he hung out of the window of the bus.

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There is no comparison between the great Sir Charles Chaplin and Raj Kapoor. I am like a lamp in front of the sun. His was an art that will remain forever, as long as human beings exist on this earth and flowers bloom. When I was very young I was an ardent fan of Charlie Chaplin. I had seen his *City Lights*, *Modern Times*, *The Gold Rush* and *Limelight*. What inspired me in his work was the 'little man', and when I began my career, I saw the 'little man' all around in our country—the downtrodden, the man beaten for no fault of his. What drew me to Chaplin's films was Chaplin himself—the hobo, the bum, the common man. I was not drawn to him so much because of his get-up, but because of the simplicity of the 'little man' and his human emotions. How he enjoyed life, even though he was so poor. There was so much of Chaplin that affected me—the thought process behind all his beliefs. I think his hobo was one of the greatest characters ever conceived.

With Frank Capra (to his left) (1955).

Certain films left a profound mark on my life, like certain relationships did. And certain film-makers nearly changed my art, like Frank Capra. In all my films, it is the common man, the underdog, who ultimately manages to get the best deal from life. I have always shared the optimism of Capra's *It Happened One Night*.

Last Days

'Everything is here, in this world and in this lifetime. All good, all evil, all happiness, all misery, everything. There is nothing else after death. It is all one big zero. You live and you die. And there the matter ends. Perhaps, when you come to a point in time where you know that you are now a legend … it is time to go.'—Raj Kapoor

I had no words to express my joy when I heard that I was given this honour. I thank everybody, all of you. I am happy for two reasons. Firstly, because my father had received the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, although posthumously, and I had the privilege and the honour of receiving the award on his behalf. Little did I know that one day destiny would hand it over to me. And secondly, this reminds me how meaningful words like companions, comrades, teams, my unit, my thinkers, musicians, technicians, artists, all of them are. It is not just me, but all the others too who have made it possible for me to get this honour on their behalf, those who are not with me any more and those who are. I am sure that at this moment they are listening. I am grateful to all of you.

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Receiving the Dadasaheb Phalke Award from the former President of India, R. Venkataraman (1988)

On 2 May 1988, at the thirty-fifth National Film Festival Award presentation ceremony at Siri Fort auditorium in New Delhi, Raj Kapoor got the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for his outstanding contribution to cinema. The award, named after India's first film-maker, is the most prestigious national award of the Indian film industry. Raj Kapoor was unable to walk to the stage, having suddenly suffered an asthma attack. In a tribute to the artiste, President of India, R. Venkataraman, set aside protocol and stepped down from the podium to present the prestigious award to the ailing Raj Kapoor, seated in the front row, among the audience. This was the last time Raj Kapoor ever stood up on his feet. The curtain came down on the showman's life amidst cheers and applause, just as he had envisaged at the end of the second part of *Mera Naam Joker*, a screenplay that was written but never made into a film.

The doyen of Indian cinema passed away on 2 June 1988 in New Delhi. The end came at 9.20 p.m. He was sixty-four. He died of multiple organ failure leading to cardiorespiratory arrest. Although a sense of deep personal loss engulfed the Kapoor family, there was an unexpressed feeling that the showman could not have asked for a better finale. Death lost its sting and Raj Kapoor, as always, stole the show.

The ailing thespian had been battling for his life since 2 May. Despite the best efforts of doctors, his condition kept deteriorating, and he slipped into a coma on 27 May. Since his admission to the hospital, he had been on the respirator. His cardiovascular functions, which were kept stable through drugs, had also deteriorated. He had to be put on dialysis, because his kidneys stopped functioning. His family was at his bedside when the end came. The Government of India arranged to send the mortal remains of this great man to Bombay by a special chartered flight.

It was a day of mourning for the entire film industry, as Raj Kapoor was taken on his last journey from his residence to the cremation grounds via R.K. Studios. Raj Kapoor had often said, 'Whenever I die, take me to my studio for it is possible that amidst the glitter of all the lights I may get up again and shout, Action! Action!' It is ironical that in his last television interview with Doordarshan a day before he received the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, he said, '*Kal khel mein hum hon na hon, gardish mein tare rahenge sada … bhuloge tum, bhulenge woh, par hum tumhare rahenge sada* (Tomorrow I may not be part of the cosmic game, but the stars will live on forever … You might forget me, and so might they, but I will be yours forever).'

Raj Kapoor's mortal remains were consigned to the flames according to Hindu rites on Friday, 3 June 1988, ending a glorious chapter of India cinema. The phenomenon of the Indian screen was cremated at the Chembur crematorium amidst the chanting of Vedic hymns. The pyre was lit by his eldest son, Randhir Kapoor.

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I am full of so many regrets, because I don't think I have reached anywhere near what I wanted to be. Lord, don't take me away when I have just started to play. When time, life, teaches you that you are closer to accepting what the One above has granted you, given you in abundance to do, to achieve, you feel that it is getting late, there is little time. There is very little time left. I feel that I am withering away.

I cannot breathe with this asthma. This is not my style of living. Of all the diseases available to man, I had to pick up asthma. I suppose the essence of life is breath; you can sing songs, you can dance, you can create, you can live. You don't smoke, you don't drink, you don't eat as much as you used to, okay! But even then, at times you are helpless. Anyway, I can't help making films and I can't help being breathless. *Saans aata nahin, ab main kehta hoon ke saans jaata kyon nahin* (I cannot breathe properly, so why does not my breath leave me altogether)!

Stills from Henna, *the film Raj Kapoor was working on when he died, and which was completed by his sons in 1990*

Tributes

Dev Anand: Actor, Producer, Director and Friend

Raj Kapoor is not dead. He has immortalized himself through his work, his unparalleled contribution to the film industry. He will live forever in the hearts and minds of his audience. People will always imagine him sitting in the front row of the show business Hall of Fame, and they will always see him smiling and laughing with pride. He died with his boots on, taking his last award. May his soul rest in peace, and may his family find solace in the fact that Raj Kapoor died so appropriately.

Dev Anand and his wife Kalpana with Mr and Mrs Raj Kapoor

Amitabh Bachchan: Actor, Producer and Relative

It is difficult to write something about a man who through his creativity and temperament gave new expression to life. His work behind the camera, of course, is now legendary—his craft and dedication were unprecedented and set new trends. But in front of the camera, too, he was exceptional. If ever anyone lived life to its fullest, it was Raj-ji. He lived and worked with a zest that was unique. He had the capacity to walk into a room and lift the level of exuberance to unimaginable heights. It was the same exuberance that was reflected in his films. He continuously thought big. His imagination knew no bounds—it was grand, sensitive and joyous. He carried with him, all the time, an undaunted spirit and a rare passion for life. Many a mortal could have survived a lifetime merely by walking past him and picking up a minuscule portion of his spirit and energy.

I first heard of the name Raj Kapoor in the early 1950s from my neighbours, who shared the four-way rented house we stayed in, in Allahabad. They were Kapoors too, and claimed they were distant relatives of 'the' Raj Kapoor. I would often hear the elders and the children of their family sing film songs which I gathered, much later, belonged to a film called *Awara*. I must have been around ten and at that age *Laurel and Hardy*, *Cinderella*, *Snow White* and *The Lone Ranger* comics were my entertainment quotient. Through the passing years, schools, colleges and universities, a world of cinema and the greats associated with it grew, mostly through the generosity of my mother, who would accompany and guide me on this fascinating medium. Raj Kapoor and his films were a

major part of her talks with me, not just because of their content but also because of the growing relationship between my father and Prithviraj Kapoor, the eminent and dynamic theatre personality of his very popular institution, Prithvi Theatre and father to Raj Kapoor. Prithviraj-ji was a regular visitor to our modest home every time his troupe toured Allahabad, and often there were late-night poetry sessions, where Prithviraj-ji and his artists would spend hours listening to my father. I cannot recollect if there was any talk of Raj Kapoor during those meetings, but we all knew whose father Prithviraj-ji was. Around the year 1960, on a private holiday to Bombay with my father and family, our hosts took us to see a film shoot—a venture, an ambition, the ultimate desire, that every individual to date wishes for when they visit the city. The studio was R.K. Studios and the shoot in progress was of a film called *Chhalia*, starring Raj-ji. Through crowds of eager heads and visitors that obstructed my view of floor one of the studio, I saw the set of a train and my first glimpse of Raj-ji enacting a sequence. No meetings, just a distant view. From that day on, and through my own subsequent journey in filmdom, Raj-ji always treated me with compassion, almost as if we were family. Maybe it was due to the relationship our fathers enjoyed. Or maybe it was premonition: his grandson Nikhil, son of Ritu, his eldest daughter, married my daughter Shweta.

Time flew by, I decided to pursue a career in films, found myself in Bombay and in the hustle and bustle of a great metropolis and the cinema industry. At a social event at the Sun-n-Sand Hotel in Juhu, to which I had managed to wangle an invitation, I had my first meeting and handshake with the great man. He was warm and friendly and had a smile of acknowledgement when I gave him my credentials—Babuji, Prithviraj-ji and Allahabad. The interaction was pleasant and lasted a few seconds. Enough for a would-be entrant into the profession to scream and enthuse about! But as time and fate propelled me further into my profession, my visits to R.K. for work and my sightings of Raj-ji grew. He saw my first film *Saat Hindustani* through the good offices of K.A. Abbas, who had a close association with him, and paid compliments. We would often see him enter R.K. and drive up to the revered 'cottage', his private domain within the studio. On occasion, he would greet us and our work. He honoured us with his presence at mahurats where he had graciously agreed to give the first clap. He accorded us the privilege of being hosted at his home in Chembur where we were lavished with Krishna-ji's legendary care and excessive culinary delights. Weddings in the family, Holi revelry, being a part of a group with him on a trip to Russia, to witness his incredible and revered popularity and respect in that country, were the several fortunate moments spent bathed in his glory.

But among the many moments, two incidents stand out. I happened to be shooting at R.K. once, when he had a special dignitary visiting the studio. After some basic formalities, Raj-ji lead the dignitary to his 'cottage' and despite the large entourage, pointed at me and asked me to join him. It was my very first peek into what lay behind the grilled wooden barriers of this often-talked-of private property. The cottage was bare. The

only furnishing was a very large white sheet-covered mattress on the floor. That's it. He guided the two of us in and turned to the dignitary and said, 'I want you to meet Amitabh Bachchan. He is the tallest talent in our film industry.' Embarrassed and humbled, I blushed at such an undeserved compliment. I could merely whisper back, 'Only in height Raj-ji,' and begged to be excused.

In 1982, when I had my accident on the sets of *Coolie* and lay struggling for my life at Breach Candy Hospital, he walked into the ICU one morning, swinging a bottle of champagne in his hand, sat down beside me and said, 'Hurry up and get out, we need to smash this bottle on your ship of life and launch a fresh new beginning.' The greatest showman of the film industry, Raj-ji was one who had joie de vivre in every pore of his being. He led and his exuberance followed him.

Raj Kapoor gives the mahurat clap for an Amitabh Bachchan film

At an open-air event, the Indian delegates were asked to sing a song. Raj-ji immediately took the lead and started '*Sare jahan se achcha, Hindustan hamara*', after

which we joined in. It was a symbolic and pertinent moment too, for there were many delegations from other countries as well.

Raj-ji had a guest appearance in my film *Naseeb* in the song '*John jaani Janaardhan*', where he played the accordion in a way that only he could. It was my moment of glory, to get to work with the great man and to have the honour of standing in the same frame as him.

Raj Kapoor was a special human being. He has left the world of Indian cinema a contribution that cannot be replicated. For his daughter Ritu to commemorate him through this book is the most commendable gesture any daughter can make. You need a special daughter to do this.

Salim Khan: Actor, Friend and Writer

Is a great man born to be great or is it his talent combined with hard work that makes him great? All are born equal but greatness is always achieved. It's not an inborn quality. Folklore says that pregnant women are advised to keep photographs of great men and this might help to give birth to a great man. There is no premium for basic goodness. Parents need to earn goodness. Cultural values need to be garnered by a family and that alone can help mankind. Everything is not inborn or merely inheritance. Abraham Lincoln believed that every person above forty years of age is responsible for the personality that he has. Your thoughts and work also determine your physical appearance.

Prithviraj Kapoor lived in a narrow lane at Janki Kutir, Juhu. Kaifi Azmi was his neighbour. Every morning Prithviraj would sprinkle water on the dusty lane so that the neighbourhood was saved from dust and heat. Prithviraj Kapoor, the doyen of theatre and cinema, was an extremely good human being and cared for others. He was born and brought up in Peshawar. Raj Kapoor was born here on 14 December 1924. One year earlier, Dilip Kumar was born in the same neighbourhood. Prithviraj and Sarvar Khan, Dilip's father, were neighbours and friends. At that time, no one could have imagined that Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar would go on to entertain and enthral audiences the world over and justify their birthplace—Kissago gali—street of entertainers and storytellers.

Life is stranger than fiction. I moved to Bombay from Indore with dreams in my eyes. Relationships are strange and some of them seem to be designed by destiny. I have been blessed to have worked with all the Kapoors, either in the capacity of an actor or an author. I acted with Prithviraj Kapoor in *Sher Shah Suri* and Randhir Kapoor acted in *Chacha Bhatija* written by me. Mahesh Kaul's *Diwana* had Raj Kapoor and Saira Banu playing lead roles and I essayed a character role in this film. Raj Kapoor was such a warm and friendly man that he interacted with all his co-stars, technicians and often mingled with junior artists too. Pathans have a tradition of touching the feet of their seniors as a mark of respect. In accordance with this, I used to touch Prithviraj Kapoor's feet and after his death I used to do so with Raj Kapoor as head of the Kapoor clan. Once Dilip and Raj

Kapoor were standing together and I entered the premises and as usual I touched Raj saab's feet and then shook hands with Dilip Kumar. Raj saab later told me that he was a little apprehensive if I would follow the tradition in the presence of Dilip Kumar and appreciated my consistency.

Raj Kapoor had a tremendous understanding of the masses and how to establish a rapport with them. After watching our film *Deewar*, he paid us rich compliments but also observed that we should have had our protagonist continue sporting the same rough-and-tough look, clothing and mannerisms also. Masses would have loved it more than the sophisticated rich man as depicted in the latter half of the story. I agreed with him.

He had such an uncanny understanding of people, places and rituals. His piercing eyes could penetrate all facades. The searchlight-like eyes could remove darkness from the subconscious of human beings. It's strange but true that the same searchlight-like eyes had kindness and love for all mankind. These very eyes submerged in the lens of his movie camera capturing human emotions. Just look at the mid close-up of these eyes in the song '*Dost dost na raha*' to understand how much he could convey through them. Raj Kapoor conveyed intense love and pity through his eyes and the eyes of the characters he directed in his films. He captured love, helplessness and longing through eyes. The way Raj Kapoor's eyes merged with the lens of the camera is beyond the realm of science to explain and understand. The most intimate and intense love scenes on screen have been enacted by Raj Kapoor and Nargis. Their on-screen chemistry was magical. They redefined physicality and spiritual love in memorable films like *Awara* and *Shree 420* with tremendous intensity. Nargis's quivering lips, a road-side vendor's steaming tea pot and gusts of rain combine to create intimacy on screen. For the first time the Indian screen witnessed sensuality that transcends into the sublime.

In Randhir Kapoor's maiden film, *Kal Aaj Aur Kal*, there is a death scene where Prithviraj says that dying is just like changing clothes and that he 'shall come back in new clothing'. My earnest prayer is that Raj Kapoor may come back again, because the joker is eternal. He ought to come back, like the scene in the film *Sangam* where he says 'I shall come back' and he does! The world will keep waiting for this!

M.F. Husain: Artist

Raj Kapoor was always surrounded by a multitude of fans; even so, he never lost sight of his goal or his foresight. Many years ago, while he was entering a cinema hall for the premiere of *Jagte Raho*, thousands milled around seeking his autograph. I happened to be in the crowd. From a distance, I shouted, 'Raj saab, can I have your autograph too?' He replied instantly, 'Husain, do you need to? Your day will come too.' (As a tribute, M.F. Husain produced twelve graphics on the film *Henna*, the last film Raj Kapoor started and which was completed after his death by his sons.)

J.P. Chowksey: Friend, Distributer, Author and Journalist

In the golden era of Indian politics, we had a large number of great leaders, but Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the most loved by the masses. Similarly, in the golden era of Indian cinema, we had many talented film-makers, but Raj Kapoor was and remains the most loved by the masses. It is difficult to describe this chemistry of love and success that marked the lives of these two great men. It is strange that both Nehru and Raj Kapoor looked like Europeans and yet established an unusual rapport with the Indian people. Perhaps it was simply their extraordinary capacity to love and be loved.

With J.P. Chowksey

Raj Kapoor made films like a passionate lover. His films were his love letters to his audience, and they too accepted them with love. They never raised questions about the films or tried to apply logic to them. They protected his films from critical analysis. His films were made in the hearts of his audience. Raj Kapoor's greatest contribution to Indian cinema is his style of combining reality with fiction. His films are based on reality but the

entire presentation is like an opera, and the audience is lost in a trance. He made epics on human vulnerability. He never filmed the lives of great warriors, kings or saints. He always projected common men, with the weaknesses and strengths of their love. This is why Raj Kapoor is immortal, and why he continues to inspire the best film-makers of the present generation.

On a ten-day outdoor schedule, Shailendra's close friend Vithal Bhai Patel, who belonged to Sagar, a few miles from the location, invited me and I lived there for ten days. I watched Raj Kapoor from close quarters. He was delighted to know that I had an MA in literature. We often talked about Saadat Hasan Manto, Amrita Pritam and Sahir, who had written songs for *Phir Subah Hogi* and *Dil Hi Toh Hai*. Raj Kapoor enquired if there was a Shiva temple nearby. He visited a remote temple on the night of Shiv Ratri. In our conversation, he remarked that for him a Hindu is one who can get and give maximum happiness to human beings. God is like a joker who gives happiness to all and hides his tears. *The Illustrated Weekly* also published Raj Kapoor's thought in one of their issues. Raj Kapoor was not a divided human being; he had a tremendous capacity to get totally immersed in whatever he did. He did not allow a shadow of the past or fear of the future to dim his zeal to live in the present wholeheartedly. He encashed today as if there would be no tomorrow.

Basu Bhattacharya had a notion about realism in films. Raj Kapoor was asked to shave at 8 p.m. to achieve a twenty-four-hour beard required by 8 p.m. the next day. Raj Kapoor did it without any complaint or tantrum although he had produced and acted in the realistic film *Jagte Raho*. As a matter of fact, no one has noticed that the timeframe in the film was also realistic. The first sequence in the film shows the time on the clock tower as 1.20 a.m. and that of the last sequence, which is predawn, as about 4 a.m. or so. In the last shot, the protagonist enters the compound of a multi-storey building to quench his thirst and gets water. The 'thirst' depicted in the film is a thirst for cultural renaissance and the title denotes keeping awake for the re-establishment of cultural values.

To some extent, Raj Kapoor's cinema was like Kabir on celluloid. It's not proper to take this thought any further but like Kabir, Raj Kapoor was not highly educated in the formal sense of the term but he was educated in the school of life. Those days that I spent with Raj Kapoor in gruelling outdoor shoots revealed Raj Kapoor as a simpleton in real life too. I am fully aware of the truth that one needs several lifetimes to fathom the depth of that enigma called Raj Kapoor.

The Kapoors are justly proud of their family tradition of entertainment and each individual gets inspiration from the near century-old tradition and enriches it with his individual talent. Thus, tradition and talent remain the fountainhead of their energy.

Nitin Mukesh: Singer, Family Friend and son of Mukesh

Whatever little I have achieved in my life started with Raj Kapoor. Raj uncle didn't even

know that I am a singer. He just knew that I am Mukesh's son, who is fond of singing—he had not even heard me sing—but he decided that come what may, he would have a song recorded in my voice for *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*, that he was shooting when my father died. He had to work very hard with me, which he did with amazing patience and love. And so, I acquired an identity of my own. I was not just Mukesh's son, but Nitin Mukesh, somebody who had sung for Raj Kapoor, for R.K. Films. This helped me a lot; I could now hike my rate. Three months after Papa died, an association agreed to do a show of mine in Papa's memory, but they would pay me a handsome amount only if Raj Kapoor came as the chief guest. Raj uncle was busy shooting, but when I told him what they were offering me, enough to keep the kitchen fires burning in my home for at least a year, Raj uncle cancelled his shoot and came down. This ensured that the entire industry—actors, stars and music directors—came for the show and it was a great success. That episode gave me a lot of confidence. This is how Raj Kapoor directly affected the fortunes of the Mukesh family.

I remember, one night Raj uncle came to our little one-room apartment. He said '*Utho … utho … utho*,' and we all quickly rolled up our beds. And he said to my mother, '*Bhabhiji, mere liye anda bana do* (Make some eggs for me)!' He knew that my mother was a staunch vegetarian. He would sit with us and pamper us and give us kids gifts. I remember my father once telling us, '*Raj ka haat hamesha hamare sar per rahega* (Raj uncle would always take care of us).' My father called him 'Raj' but everybody else called him 'Raj saab' or 'Raj-ji'. Krishna aunty herself told me that 'only Mukesh-ji called me "Krishna behenji", when everybody else called me "Krishna bhabhiji" because he is my brother and very close to us'.

My father first met Raj uncle at Famous Studios. He was playing the piano. Raj uncle was passing by him. He stopped playing and stood up, Raj uncle stepped back and said to him, 'Are you Mukesh Chand?' My father was stunned and said, 'Yes, I am!' Then Raj uncle said, 'Come and meet me in the studio tomorrow.' It was love at first sight and they became friends. My father always regarded Raj uncle as a great and noble human being and a great artist. He sang many songs for R.K. Films and became the voice of Raj Kapoor. Raj uncle always supported my father. If the song from any of the films he was acting in did not suit Mukesh's voice, he would request his producer to change that song. He believed that when Mukesh sang for him, the song would be a hit. My father had lots of ups and down in his lifetime, but Raj uncle always stood by him. He would always say, 'No Mukesh, no Raj Kapoor.'

At one time, my father took steps to become a film distributor. As it happened, he put all his life's savings and distributed *Mera Naam Joker* in Rajasthan, which was a big disaster. Consequently, he lost all his money! After some time, Raj uncle released his film *Bobby* which turned out to be a huge success. Raj uncle recovered all the losses that my father accumulated and compensated him, even though he had not distributed that film.

Their friendship was unique.

The most touching time was when my father died. Raj uncle was shooting his film *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* in Loni, Pune. The most expensive set had been erected with stars like Shashi Kapoor and Zeenat Aman present. Raj uncle cancelled the shoot. He said, '*Meri aatma chalee gayi, ab mein kaam nahi kar pahunga* (My soul has gone away, I will not be able to work). I have lost my best friend.' After that he and Krishna aunty were always with us in our hour of need, till we all, particularly I, had settled down to the new reality.

Yash Chopra: Producer, Director and Friend

I have been a great fan of Raj Kapoor's since my college days, when I saw his first film *Aag*. It made a great impression on me. I remember one particular dialogue from the film: 'A hundred years ago, when I was ten years old…' That line still haunts me. Each time I think of making a film, I feel I should make *Aag*, and Raj-ji was so young when he made that film!

I remember when *Awara* was released. Those days, films were not released on the same day all over the country. I used to live in Jalandhar and the film was releasing in Delhi. We went to Delhi by the night train to catch the first day, first show.

With Yash Chopra

Raj Kapoor was a passionate film-maker. Every film of his was a milestone in film-making, he was in every sense a showman. Unlike today's film-makers, his work had the deepest roots in our tradition, he always thought Indian, yet he made films much ahead of

their time, thematically and technically. People call me a romantic director, a director of human emotions, but no film director has been able to portray passion in his or her films as Raj Kapoor did. All my inspiration comes from Raj-ji. I remember I made a film called *Silsila* with a lot of passion. I thought it was a great film, but it didn't do as well as I had expected it to. I was depressed, and didn't feel like going anywhere or meeting anybody. There was a wedding function that I couldn't avoid, and I met Raj Kapoor there. He walked up to me and said, 'You have made a brilliant film, but you made some mistakes. Every film-maker makes mistakes, or we would be gods … Your mistake was that you made your heroine pregnant before her marriage, when she was carrying a different image with the public … this fact could not be accepted by the public.' Then he gave me a compliment, which remains the greatest compliment I have ever received. He said, 'I have also gone to Amsterdam and shot tulips in the same gardens and fields where you shot, but I must say that in your shots and in your concept, you brought poetry into those tulips. Don't ever change your style, your sensibility. My wife Krishna is a great fan of yours. After my films, she says, she only likes your films.' I was overwhelmed and my eyes were heavy with tears. I had to leave the party. I realized that our job is to make films. We cannot control the destiny of the film. Audiences are never wrong, we are wrong. From the next day, I was a new man and I started planning my next project.

We had gone to the Tashkent Film Festival in USSR in 1976. It was a memorable trip for us. I have attended many festivals but I have never seen anybody from India being treated like a real king of the soil in another country. There were forty-eight delegates. For everybody else there was the special bus, Raj Kapoor alone was given a private car and an interpreter. We all had to register and get our coupons for lunch and dinner, but there was no coupon system for Raj Kapoor. We took an overnight train from Tashkent to Samarkand. Raj Kapoor was the only one with a compartment to himself. When we reached Samarkand in the morning, it was a sight to behold! The whole city had come to receive him! At the function at night, they only sang songs from his films. Later, we were to take a flight to Moscow, and Raj Kapoor asked us to wait while he went to a hotel and got biryani and kebabs packed for lunch. We reached the airport late, but of course the flight was waiting for Raj Kapoor!

A good film needs no language. Even if you don't know the language and you follow the film, you weep and you laugh with the characters, that's a good film. A great film-maker should be able to communicate without words. Raj Kapoor did that.

Shukla Kumar, wife of Rajendra Kumar—Actor, Colleague and Friend

A tribute to Raj-ji is a very special topic for me to talk about. A very precious relationship, a rare kind of friendship, between two men, who were contemporaries in their profession and yet had no competition with each other, except I think to show who loved the other more. I must mention that Rajendra-ji's first introduction to Raj Kapoor and his legacy,

was in his early childhood, growing up in Pakistan, Sialkot, as the grandson of a textile businessman. Rajendra-ji showed interest in cinema at a very young age, and in those times it was not considered a dignified career. But he remembers his grandfather's advice who solemnly said, 'If you wish to join films, be like Prithviraj Kapoor.'

When Raj-ji was planning to make *Sangam*, he was looking for someone to play the second lead. At first, he was considering Dilip Kumar, but he failed in getting him to play the role. Raj-ji approached Rajendra-ji, who was a well-established actor in the 1960s. That was the start of a great connection between the two men, who both loved cinema, and though that passion formed a loving rapport that extended to their families. Raj-ji fondly called Rajendra-ji 'Pajindere' which means brother. I think he truly felt for him as much as he did for his own brothers, to the extent that even Papaji (as Prithviraj Kapoor was fondly called), and Krishna-ji (Raj Kapoor's wife) would tell Rajendra-ji to convey some message to Raj-ji, if they could not talk to him directly on some issues related to family or work. Raj-ji would listen to him, even if he disagreed. Their love and respect for each other was immense.

The film was a journey of self-discovery and grooming for Rajendra-ji, due to the exposure he got through his friend. They travelled, they fought, they loved and they laughed together. The wives became good friends and so did the kids. In fact, Raj-ji's kids being older were friends with Rajendra-ji and me. This bond has continued over the years, through thick and thin, and now extends to the grandchildren. Krishna-ji and I are till today the closest of friends, sisters and more than family for each other. I was and I am a great fan of Raj-ji, even today, more than I am a fan of my husband, and I would not shy away from saying this to my husband.

Besides professional moments, we have spent many moments together as a family, going on holidays overseas, spending time at Raj-ji's farm at Loni and many other precious times together. Raj-ji was a creative genius ahead of his time, with a deep sense of romance. I would often tell my husband that Raj-ji's romantic sense touched our hearts deeper than anyone else, including some of my husband's romantic roles. This man left behind an imprint on us so profound and precious that all I can say is that he is enriched all the lives that encountered him. God bless his soul.

Bina Lalwani: Family Friend

It was February 1964. Clearly a predestined golden day in my life. I was twenty-two years old. I lived in London, with my large family. They had a business in electronics which was named after me, Binatone. My sister, Pushpa, and I had a chance introduction with the chief guests at an important function, Mr and Mrs Raj Kapoor, and the moment we had reverently done our namastes, a mutual feeling of déjà vu enveloped us. Mrs Krishna Raj Kapoor was the most angelic, elegant lady I had seen! Her warm smile is as alive in my heart today as it felt in that moment and Raj Kapoor, the charmer, seemed larger in life

than his screen image. Upon learning that they were to remain in London for a longish time while he worked on his ambitious film, *Sangam*, Pushpa and I invited them to our home for dinner, even though it sounded ridiculous and impossible. It must have been a truly blessed-by-the-gods moment, because they accepted our humble invite and the rest is history. The Kapoors and the Lalwanis went on to forge a relationship over the years, in its third generation by now, that history books are made of. The two families to this day feel like one, as though a sacred thread runs through. Cherished memories, celebrations, moments of grief and joy have enriched me and influenced my character in several ways. Raj-ji became a true big brother to our family and Bhabhiji was a pillar of sparkling energy who lit up everyone's heart. She is no different to this day. Among the many wonderful anecdotes, the one that amuses me most and is least known about Raj-ji is worth sharing. It was in the mid-1970s when his most ambitious and passionate movie, *Mera Naam Joker*, had failed and he had lost his nerve for a while. Compounding his pain, another tragedy befell their family. Papaji, his revered father, discovered he had cancer. By now I was married to Andy Ramani in New York and had two daughters, Malini and Gitu, aged two and three years. With Andy's meagre salary at Air India we lived in a compact flat on the wrong side of town. Raj-ji had taken upon himself to take care of his father's health at the best cancer hospital, which turned out to be the Memorial Sloan Kettering in New York. This new responsibility came at a time when his finances and spirits were at an all-time low. But Raj-ji was a pragmatic man who preferred a simple life of humility. His bed was a mattress on the floor, with minimal fuss. Thus, it came to pass that instead of opting for a fancy hotel in New York for the five–six-week duration of his father's hospitalization, he chose to stay in our apartment, where we made him a cosy bedroom in our small dining area. He felt very comfortable, participated in potluck cooking, games and pulled off mouth-watering kebabs, scrambled eggs, mushrooms, anything that caught his fancy at the local grocery store, every once in a while.

He loved my kids and took great joy when they climbed and jumped on his mattress with him. He recited poems with them. He sometimes opted to change two buses to reach his destination at the hospital. All through this time, he was conceiving his next film, humming tunes out loud. I overheard him composing '*Jhooth bole kauwa kaate*'! All of which was to be a part of his biggest blockbuster, *Bobby*! In the evenings, he enjoyed his whisky tipples with my husband, Andy. The Black Label had been downgraded to Red Label. He adapted to this supposed downgrade from his cushy lifestyle with great ease. We saw him in those hard times sometimes as an innocent child, other times as a burdened man or as the bon vivant when we ventured into his favourite Russian restaurant, Odessa, then as a brave, caring son to his father, and then again concerned for overburdening us with his presence. We loved every moment of his being with us. This was all together a priceless learning experience. Great memories of decades ago continue to unfold in my psyche and enrich me as a person.

Kuppy Khanna: Family Friend

Uncle observed all, from children to beggars to the domestic help. He used to draw inspiration from how the common man lived. And that's also what drove his creative process and made him such an incredible showman. When we were kids, he used to watch us perform dances and play 'doll, doll'. Whatever touched his heart, he would absorb into his creative process. The famous song from *Bobby*, '*Jhoot bole kauwa kaate*' was inspired by his daughter Ritu and me. We used to sing and dance to this song! He always took everyone's opinion on his films and music. He had a keen musical ear, whenever he recorded a new song, he would sing it himself to an audience, using his hands to get the beat, and gauge everyone's reaction. And every time he would be taken aback by someone's reaction, he would exclaim, '*Dekho, mere baal khade ho gaye aur meri aankh mein aansoon hai* (Look, pointing to his arm, my hairs are standing on end and there's a tear in my eye)!' He had soul-piercing insight. He could see through people. He loved spending time in local south Indian restaurants, so he could be around common men. Gita Bhavan in Chembur used to be his favourite. He would spend hours there, observing, watching and assimilating everything. He was definitely a showman first, it was his true nature. He spoke articulately and was always very animated, expressing with his hands while trying to bring home a point. Since Bhabhiji didn't know '*atta-dal ka bhaw*', he would often jokingly taunt her, 'Look at my Marie Antoinette, give them cake if there is no bread!'

Behind the mask of the showman was a very loving father, who had a soft corner for his girls. He treated me like his own daughter as well. My most cherished memory of him is from my own wedding. He assured my father, who was bankrupt at the time, he should not worry about my wedding as he would take care of it. And he did. I clearly remember him standing at the gates of my house in a lane in Matunga, personally receiving all the guests. Even at this festive occasion, he only drank in celebration after the doli had left the house.

Karan Johar: Producer and Director

Hit films of the 1990s, the decade in which we didn't have Raj Kapoor, show huge influences of Raj Kapoor. He has been a source of inspiration to so many that it is not only his family but many film-makers in the industry who continue to keep the spirit of Raj Kapoor alive. He is a one-man school of cinema that has been studied so very closely by so many people. His cinema is often divided into two parts: the vintage Raj Kapoor, comprising very critic-friendly classics of the black and white era, from *Aag* and *Awara* to *Jagte Raho*; and the post-vintage Raj Kapoor, the phase that produced films like *Bobby* and *Sangam*. Many have said that vintage Raj Kapoor was far superior and made some of the greatest contributions to Indian cinema. The second phase is generally regarded as mass-audience friendly. Raj Kapoor, therefore, is that rare film-maker who combines both art

and entertainment in his work. From critics to the lay audience, everybody has an opinion on his films.

I believe it was Raj Kapoor who introduced opulence on celluloid. Grand sets, the way he shot havelis—that did not happen before him. And he presented his women in such a manner that he made them look impossibly desirable. He is also the only film-maker who used the trolley—charging towards a character—in such an effective way, using the camera masterfully in scenes of emotional confrontation. We film-makers call it the 'Raj Kapoor trolley'. The concept of extravaganza, the concept of taking top shots in cinema, also comes from Raj Kapoor.

The most effective filming method he used was the apparent contradiction of subtle emotions and opulent backdrops, as in *Prem Rog* and *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*. Every time you see a film of his that looks big and grand, the emotions are not theatrical, and yet they are amazingly effective. I can never forget a little scene of *Prem Rog*. A thorn pricks the heroine's foot. The hero tries to take it out, but she keeps herself away as she is a widow. He persists, and she says, '*Bahut zid karne lage ho*, Dev (You have become very stubborn).' He replies, '*Tumne jo karni chhod di* (Because you have stopped being stubborn).' This one line conveyed the entire gamut of emotions with subtlety. This was the brilliance of Raj Kapoor.

You can't really explain Raj Kapoor, you just have to experience him! Every time you watch a film by him, it is an experience. He wove everything together—drama, emotions, music. You can pick any one of his films, and each one is a gem. You can't better him. If you are filming a love triangle, you go back to *Sangam*. For a young love story, go back to *Bobby*. In *Awara*, he made the mother of all father–son confrontation dramas. When I was shooting *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham*, I went back to *Awara*. Raj Kapoor's work is like the Bible for most film-makers.

Ketan Desai: Producer, Director and Shammi Kapoor's son-in-law

My father Manmohan Desai worshipped the ground Raj Kapoor walked on. He started his career at the age of twenty by directing Raj-ji in *Chhalia*. Raj Kapoor had predicted then that Manmohan Desai would be a great director and film-maker, which he became.

When my father was scripting his film *Naseeb*, he had an idea, of a film party on screen which a lot of film personalities would attend. My father wanted me to approach Raj-ji and ask him to be a guest artist in that sequence. I mustered all my courage, made an appointment and went to see him. His response was: 'Manmohan Desai could have told me on the phone and I would have reached the sets.' I was stunned. And because of him, all the other artists came for the sequence which is still talked about in the industry as one of the best highlights of any movie. At the shooting of the sequence, my father was worried how he would coordinate with so many stars. Raj-ji understood, and said, 'Manmohan, I am the class monitor for this school and this event. You don't have to worry

about any actor.' And he handled that, even arriving early on the sets to ensure all the other actors, following their senior's example, arrived on time!

Once when we were shooting at R.K. Studios, Raj-ji visited our sets as a courtesy. This visit was at a time when we were struggling to set up a shot that would accommodate the grandeur of the set and the stars who were performing in the shot. Raj-ji left after a few minutes and called me to his cottage. When I went there he told me to reduce the height of the camera by six inches, move back the position of the camera by two feet and change the lens to a particular type. We did as he advised and the shot was perfect!

The iconic song sequence from Naseeb

Rahul Rawail: Producer, Director and Colleague

My greatest privilege has been working as an assistant director with Raj Kapoor. If I start talking about his command of cinema, all the advice that he gave me, it would probably take me a couple of months to finish. I will relate just one incident that should say it all.

I made a film in 1985 called *Arjun*. There was a sequence in the film that was filmed at Flora Fountain in Bombay using seven different cameras, all concealed and placed at different spots. The idea was to stage the action, without people knowing that it was a film being shot, so that genuine reactions could be captured on screen. The sequence was shot at 1.30 p.m. in the afternoon, when the lunch-hour crowd was at its peak. This sequence could not have a retake, so all the cameramen were instructed to zoom in or out, so that I would have a large variety of angles and magnifications to use.

The film was shown to Raj saab at R.K. Studios. During the interval, someone asked me how many cameras I had used for the Flora Fountain sequence, and I said seven. Raj saab immediately turned around and said, 'How come seven cameras? I saw only six

angles!' This shocked me, because though we had indeed used seven cameras to shoot, one of the cameras had malfunctioned during the shoot and we were left with material from only six. From 133 cuts of different magnification, to pick out the fact that there were six cameras used, not seven, was only possible for a genius like Raj saab.

B.J. Panchal: Family Photographer

I have been associated with Raj Kapoor as a photographer since 1947. He was a wonderful subject for any camera. Raj and all the Kapoors are natural masters of showbiz. They play to the gallery and to the camera.

I was treated like a family member by Raj Kapoor. I could enter his studio, his premises, his cottage at any time. He never made me feel I was an employee. He would take me to all the premieres, in Madras, Bangalore, Calcutta, Delhi, wherever. I suppose for him it was a status symbol that he had a personal photographer!

Raj was a man of deep feelings, even if he wasn't demonstrative. Once at a function at the Turf Club, I accidently put my thumb on a live wire. I began to shout like a madman in agony. Everybody watched helplessly. Raj and Nargis were present, and hearing the noise, they came to see what was happening. When he saw me, Raj jumped forward and kicked away the wire. I was saved. Later, Nargis reproached Raj saying, 'How could you have touched a man who was being electrocuted! What if anything had to happened to you?' Raj replied, 'But that was not any man, that was Panchal!'

Vinny Ahuja: Family Friend

Raj Kapoor might have spent millions on his films but he was a very simple man who was childlike and behaved like a common man. Sometimes we would go to small wayside south Indian restaurants to eat and just sit and watch the world go by. Sometimes we went to the races together. Like children, we used to have a partnership, we would pool in ?500 each! He had an arrangement with a bookie who would accept our small bets. At the end of the races we used to sit in the cafeteria and settle our account, which also included the snacks we ate!

We were neighbours and used to meet regularly, twice a week, and talk over drinks. He was at his best when he had receptive company. He talked of stories and his films. He did not need a scriptwriter or a musician to improve on what he said or the tune that he created. He explained a movie to me and later if I saw even a part of it on the screen, I felt that I had already seen a clearer version earlier. His expression was so perfect that by the time he produced the film some quality was lost.

He was very profound in his thinking and his philosophy had as much depth as it was simple: it was all about kindness and goodness. And these are the qualities he communicated through the medium of celluloid. Take *Awara* or *Shree 420*—he made them fifty years ago, but the subject is as fresh today as it was then!

Sanjay Khan: Actor, Colleague and Friend

Raj Kapoor was a towering, lovable and greatly admired film personality internationally. His dancing blue eyes, his charming smile, lovable tonality of his voice combined to create a thrilling experience for anyone who met him or saw him on screen. My introduction to Raj Kapoor was through his film *Awara*. I was ten years old. I had never seen a film before as my father did not allow me to go to the cinema hall. But I managed to convince our house help to somehow sneak me into the theatre to watch *Awara* without my father's knowledge.

I was so enthralled by Raj Kapoor's magic, the character of the tramp and the lilting music of '*Awara hoon*'. This totally captivated me. That was the day I decided to make my career in films. I had to wait for almost seven years before I could meet the great Raj Kapoor. I could not believe my eyes when I saw him in flesh and blood at R.K. Studios. I was a tall, skinny, shy young man. I just gaped at him. He got up smilingly and came close and gave me a strong hug. That was the beginning of a great association that developed into a great friendship which culminated in my directing and co-starring with my idol in my film *Abdullah* which was launched in 1978. There was an incident on the set where he was to deliver a long dialogue in front of more than 2,000 army jawans in the middle of the desert on location in Jaisalmer surrounded by a sizeable film unit and its paraphernalia like wind fans and cranes. He was to deliver the lines where he breaks down on hearing of the loss of his adopted son on the samadhi of the child's mother. During the delivery, I felt

there was a glitch in the dialogue pattern as Raj-ji had slipped into the avatar of the 'joker'. I immediately cut the shot. A stunned Raj Kapoor looked at me. I could see anger in his eyes but I walked up to him and whispered in his ear: 'Raj-ji, please cut the joker out.' Instantly there was a charming, understanding smile and a twinkle in his eye. The next shot was perfection. This shot was delivered with such passion that even his camel nudged him with its snout and followed him out.

The day I signed Raj Kapoor for this film, on my way out I bumped into Daboo. He said something funny which I still remember. He said: 'Are you crazy, you are signing Raj Kapoor for this film. Even the cockerels of R.K. Studios crow at 2 p.m. in the afternoon. He will never come on time for the shoot.' Daboo was wrong—he did! As agreed between Raj-ji and myself, he would come on the dot of 12 noon every day and stay till late at night and finish his work. One day, while shooting deep in the desert on the set of the film, the unit was surprised that Raj-ji had not come though the noon deadline had passed. We spotted a car in the horizon, his white Ambassador. It was 12.30 p.m. It was our practice to take supporting shots while waiting for him and include him when he came in. However, mischievously I told my crew to cut all the lights, turn the reflectors down and relax as if we had been waiting for hours for the great star to arrive. Raj Kapoor jumped out of the car and rushed to his room as I deliberately sat with my back to the gate, pretending to read the newspaper. Vijay Pande, my assistant, standing in front of me gave a running commentary of how he had arrived and was rushing into the room. Soon, his butler Repti came out and requested Vijay Pande to meet Raj-ji. Vijay went and met him and told me on his return that Raj-ji was inquiring whether 'saab' was in a good mood or bad mood. We used to call each other 'saab' affectionately. Raj Kapoor entered the shooting area and, seeing the disposition of the crew, walked up to the lights, touched them and started shaking his head and burst into laughter. He said, 'You guys are pulling my leg,' and inquired why the lights were warm if we had not been shooting. I told him that we did this to bring some humour and laughter. The whole unit started laughing.

Raj Kapoor was a very affectionate and generous man. I was quite surprised when I sometimes I heard people speak otherwise about him. He made a guest appearance in *Chandi Sona* for a song being shot in Mauritius. The musicians were on strike then. We were in a quandary. Raj Kapoor went out of the way to settle the strike, record the song and brought it with him so we could shoot it the next day. After the final round of shooting in Rooptara studios, we both drove down in his car for a wedding at the Oberoi. After the reception formalities, Raj-ji and myself were sitting in a bar and having a drink. My PA brought in a sleek new briefcase with a lakh of rupees in cash. This amount was very large then. I offered him this money as a token of gratitude as there was no professional contract and he said he would do it as a guest appearance. He was furious at the offer and said that he could not accept it. With Krishna-ji and my wife Zarine as witness to this animated gesture he held his hand next to mine and said, '*Dekho ji hum do Pathan, ek Hindu ek Musulman*.' He told me that in the future if I make a film with him in the lead role then he would charge me and I was to pay him whatever he asked for. I shook hands with him and said, 'Done.'

In 1978, as I was planning my shoot for *Abdullah*, I went to his cabin and saw him relaxing on the divan. We discussed *Abdullah* and I asked him to name his fees. I still remember him drumming his fingers on his chest while looking at the ceiling. Suddenly he sprung up and said, 'I will charge you this much.' It was a fairly large amount for those times but without hesitation I extended my hand and shook on it. He wrenched his hand free and smilingly said, 'I was joking, saab!' Then I prevailed upon him, reminding him about his Pathan quote and our promise to each other—the fee he will charge and the fee I will agree to!

I remember numerous joyful incidents with Raj Kapoor, either at his famous Holi bashes, parties, my sister Dilshad's wedding where Raj-ji, Krishna-ji, Daboo and Chintu were present on all the three days and served the guests, our travels abroad, or on the set of his films which are some of my most cherished memories of this simple lovable man, this great genius of our time.

One thing I have to mention is a story he narrated when he was in a relaxed mood about how he sent a telegram to Vyjayanthimala saying '*Bol Radha bol sangam hoga ki nahi*?' and pat got an answer: '*Hoga, hoga, hoga*.' This triggered an idea in his mind and he immediately called Shailendra, the great lyricist, and handed these two lines to him. Shailendra walked out into the garden with a slip of paper and came back in a few minutes with two lines: '*Tere mann ki Ganga, mere mann ki Jamuna ka, bol Radha bol, sangam hoga ki nahin*'. After a few drinks he called Jaikishen, the famous maestro, who arrived at 3 a.m. By 6 a.m. the famous song of *Sangam* was completed and ready for recording.

Prior to going to Russia for the release of *Abdullah*, the Russian Consul General invited me for a meeting and requested 1,000 prints of the film for distribution. I was

stunned at the huge quantity of prints. But when I introduced Raj Kapoor on stage in the giant 6,000-seater cinema in Moscow I was amazed with the standing applause by the entire theatre which went on for five minutes. That day I saw the great love and respect he commanded amongst the Russians—and understood the need for 1,000 prints. It made me even prouder that I was standing with him on stage.

One incident which always amuses me is about the precious bottle of Tabasco, perhaps the only bottle in Moscow in those days, which was always in Raj-ji's jacket pocket, a few drops of which he meticulously put on each of our plates as the food was quite bland. After serving everyone he would put the bottle safely back in his pocket. Sometimes Daboo would want to grab the bottle for a few more drops but Raj-ji would stop him and say that there was only one bottle and we needed to ration it. One morning, on the day Raj-ji departed for London from Moscow, the bottle was sent to my room with specific instructions to be hand delivered to me. Daboo was miffed by this, after he had been denied the bottle by Raj-ji.

The last time I saw Raj-ji alive was at Breach Candy hospital where he had gone for a routine check-up prior to his trip to Delhi to receive the Dadasaheb Phalke Award. He was in an irritable mood, repeatedly asking Krishna-ji where his favourite Eau de Cologne 4711 was. I intervened and said, 'Saab, why are you fighting with Krishna-ji over a small thing? I will make a call to Dubai and will get the bottle flown in tomorrow.' I was highly disturbed the next day when we got the news that Raj-ji had gone into a coma. The nation was shocked! Meanwhile, the Cologne 4711 arrived and I carried it with me to Delhi thinking to myself the entire time that he will be all right. I handed the bottle to Krishna-ji. But unfortunately, he passed away soon after. The day his funeral pyre was lit, I saw the black smoke go up into the air. I choked with tears and the music of '*Awara hoon*' played in my mind. My thought was that I will never see 'saab' again. Seven days after the funeral, Krishna-ji called me and says: 'You know what I did with the bottle? I emptied the content of the bottle on his body after the final bath and before the funeral.' I choked again and I could barely hear what she was talking. In my thoughts, I was a ten-year-old watching his film *Awara* at Elgin Theatre in Bangalore.

Suman Sehgal: Friend

Whenever I hear the phrase '*Hindi Russi bhai bhai*', it takes me back to an incident in my life. It was a cold, dark and a gloomy day and I was a part of a team negotiating a barter contract involving timber. The contract brought us to the remote place of Blagoveshchensk, on the Amur River, which separated the then Soviet Union from China. Shivering in the -43 degree-Celsius temperature, we decided to brave the cold and go out of the hotel. As we were getting acclimatized, a local man walked up to us and politely asked what country we were from since we looked every bit like foreigners. On being told that we were from India, he promptly broke out into the song '*Mera joota hai Japani, yeh*

patloon englishtani, sar pe laal topi russi, phir bhi dil hai Hindustani'! Within minutes the love for Raj Kapoor had taken over. Twenty-five to thirty people collected, singing and dancing, and passing around some dried fish and vodka to keep the cold out. Only a showman such as Raj Kapoor could organize a party without physically being there! I salute the man who spread love through his work, who is even today remembered in that country and loved by the older generation of Russians. I salute the man who helped in coining the phrase '*Hindi Russi bhai bhai*'.

Prem Chopra: Actor, Colleague and wife's brother-in-law

Raj Kapoor had told me that he had a guest appearance for me in *Bobby*, a film being shot in Pune. I reached the sets and asked for the dialogues. Raj Kapoor, the director, said, 'The heroine is a new girl. The moment she enters, you will hold her hand tightly and say, '*Prem naam hai mera* … Prem Chopra (My name is Prem … Prem Chopra)!'

I looked at him blankly. He held firm: 'This is the dialogue.' I was surprised at the lines Raj-ji had given me; I was not happy. I realized that as I was currently doing other roles, this could set a wrong precedent. He reiterated that this was the role he had in mind for me at the time, but promised to compensate with a full-fledged role later. But it seemed that even in the guest appearance, I had just this one dialogue in the film. It did not feel right. I shared this with Prem Nath (my co-actor and brother-in-law), who was on the sets that day. He replied prophetically, 'Just believe me, this film will be a big hit. You will get publicity worth millions; your dialogue will be a super hit.' Soon after the release of *Bobby*, I was in Dalhousie for the shooting of *Kala Sona* (1975). I was returning by train to Delhi, when the ticket inspector (TT) and the rest of the staff recognized me. The TT must have informed the railway authorities that I was on the train because when we reached the station there was a huge gathering clamouring for me. They were reciting 'the line'. The TT requested me to come out and wave to the public. When I stepped out, the only thing they wanted of me was to say was that one line. I played to the gallery, '*Prem naam hai mera*, Prem Chopra!' And the public loved it! They still do. The train stopped at every station till we reached Delhi, and I repeated the performance at each stop. The next day the headline in a Delhi newspaper read that the train from Dalhousie to Delhi had been delayed by an hour because of Prem Chopra. I had never expected such a reaction.

I soon realized that I had to deliver 'the line' at every show in India or abroad henceforth. The dialogue that I had been unhappy about had made me a brand for life. Overnight it became my trademark, synonymous with me.

Indira Aswani: Family Friend

Pesu and I have been friends with Raj and Krishna-ji for over fifty years. We had great times together. He was present at all my children's weddings. He would sing the Doli song and make us all cry! Once I requested him to help me decorate the mandap for my

samdhi's daughter's wedding. He went out of his way to not only make a beautiful mandap, but also decorate the entrance of the wedding, thinking it was my daughter's wedding! He was always very protective about Krishna-ji. Once, when my daughter Minal was getting married in London, Krishna-ji was to come. It was winter and it was very cold. He allowed Krishna-ji to come, but on one condition. He said, 'Take her but look after her.' One incident which was funny and embarrassing was when at one of our parties, Raj, Krishna-ji and Vyjayanthimala and Dr Bali were in the same elevator! I had invited Raj and Krishna-ji and Pesu, my husband, had invited Vyjayanthimala and Dr Bali! Obviously, it was the time when their relationship was strained. I remember once Raj met a certain lady at my party, after which he told me such people should not be meeting you! Once I had used an eyeshadow on my eyes. Raj came up to me and said, 'Indira, you look lovely as you are. You are not an actress! Eyeshadow is not meant for you!

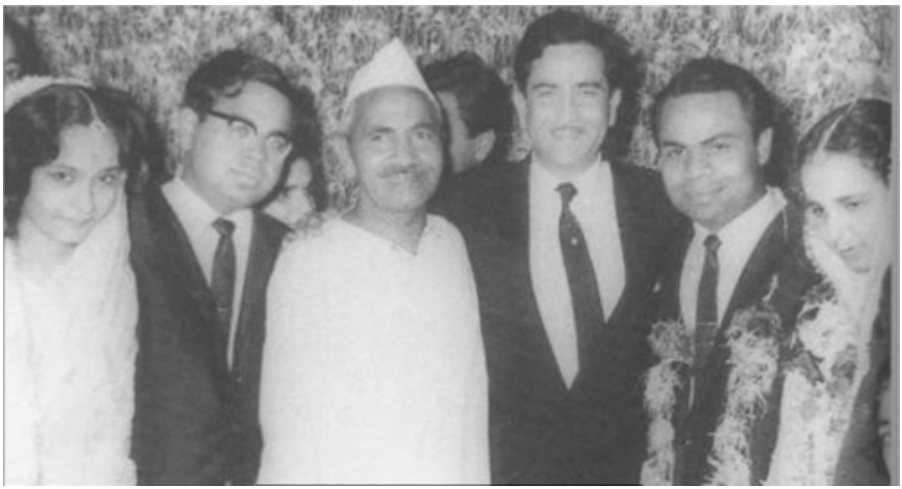
Dr O.P. Kapoor: Doctor and Family Friend

Once Raj Kapoor was the chief guest at a function organized by Dr O.P. Kapoor at the Shanmukhananda Auditorium, on behalf of the Grant Medical College Student Association. In the presence of two thousand students and doctors, during his speech, he said, 'Dr Kapoor is good enough to look after my health. But, I would like you to pressure him to look after my weaknesses!' The applause he got was deafening. He said it so innocently, like a child, and with a frankness which not many people of his stature would dare to display!

The Hindujas

In 1957 we started distributing his many masterpieces to world audiences. At the many premieres we organized overseas, fans became ecstatic! This business association transformed into a close family relationship between us and Raj, Krishna-ji (the centre of his life) and his gifted children. This relationship with Raj Kapoor remains among our fondest memories. I salute those who put in their best without worrying about returns. '*Har dil jo pyaar karega, woh gaana gaayega*'. The above line says it all. Raj-ji was not just a great showman; he was the complete showman, a philosophical showman who understood rare nuances of life and captured them in such a simple manner that it created an instantaneous bond with his audience. He was a good soul whose heart reverberated for the common man. A rare film-maker: a producer, an actor, a director, a music composer, all rolled into one; such consummate proficiency in the craft is extremely hard to come by. He built a team who understood his vision, uniquely backed him up and read his mind perfectly to bring out on celluloid, exactly what he wanted. Till this day, no one has been able to replace him and perhaps, no one ever would. He lived and breathed his films. They were his life's philosophy depicted on 70mm. His creations are timeless and therefore, he too remains a timeless creation of the Almighty.

As a person, he was the life of every occasion; be it a party, an informal gathering or a premiere. The relationship with the Hinduja family began with his fondness for my late eldest brother, Giridhar Hinduja. It was then nurtured by my elder brother, Srichand, and then by me. Having distributed his films overseas, I can vividly recall many instances of the times spent with him, up close and about. In the Russian and Middle Eastern markets including Iran, he was as popular as the then Prime Minister Nehru and in some countries; his popularity even soared past Nehru's.



Raj Kapoor with the Hinduja family

Raj Kapoor was an excellent ambassador of Indian culture abroad. Worldwide, whether it was Syria, Jordan, Greece or even London, it is credit to Raj Kapoor alone that Indian cinema could tap into overseas markets and pave the way for Bollywood today. Back then in London, Indian films used to run at most for a matinee show on weekends. When *Sangam* was released, we had booked the cinema halls in London for the entire week, much to the surprise of the theatre owners who thought we had gone crazy. But when *Sangam* ran to a full house, show after show, it was Raj Kapoor and we who had the last laugh.

At the *Shree 420* premiere that was organized in Tehran, which he was invited to, the whole lane leading up to the venue was so crowded with his fans that it became practically impossible for him to leave the venue. I remember he had come wearing a navy-blue suit and sported a red tie. Red was a colour that symbolized communism then and it was not the favoured ideology of the then Iranian regime. We made him remove his red tie and arranged for the Iranian police to slip him out of the cinema hall through the back door, shove him into the jailor's van and speed off.

Raj loved nightlife and nightclubs. Whenever he visited a club, the ongoing show would invariably be stopped and he would be asked to take centre stage and takeover.

Never one to disappoint, he would break into his impromptu numbers from *Awara*, *Mera Naam Joker*, *Shree 420* etc. The claps would never stop, egging him on and on, and he always obliged because he and his fans were inseparable.

In Tehran, his magnum opus *Sangam* ran for three years continuously and to packed theatres from the first to the last show!! One has often heard of a local language film with such record runs in its home country. But for an Indian film to run for three years at a stretch, without a break, in a foreign country like Iran, where the average run for any movie till date has not been more than three weeks, I am yet to come across one. Once he was invited to inaugurate a TV station in Iran. Not one to be satisfied with ribbon-cutting and button-pressing, he landed up at the inauguration in costume with a dholak singing '*Hum us desh ke vaasi hain, jis desh mein Ganga behti hai*'. The inauguration created waves. To this day that TV station continues to thrive. In Iran, the now famous singer, Gogoosh, then only a child artist, built her career singing '*Ichak daana, pichak daana*' with the help of Raj Kapoor.

The usual contract for overseas film rights includes a clause that the film would not be edited. But to adapt to local market requirements, we had edited and dubbed *Sangam* in Farsi. The movie had a platinum jubilee run! Raj Kapoor came and insisted that he would like to see this version. We dissuaded him since he would have watched it many times. He insisted and we had to relent. Throughout the movie, I was virtually on my toes, afraid of his famous temper. To my surprise, he hugged me at the end of the film, commenting, 'Even I couldn't have edited it any better.'

Music and songs stirred his soul. He used to take a personal interest in the music and even lyrics of every song in his films. He used to come to our home in London often, sit on the ground with a harmonium and sing. Once he sang, '*Jaane kahan gaye woh din*', the signature song of his philosophical autobiography, *Mera Naam Joker*, which was in the works then. Then he asked, 'Gopi, *kya kehta hai*?' I immediately told him it would be a hit and hit it was.

Raj had a great zest for life and was a great lover of food. When he used to throw private parties, he used to carefully choose the menu himself and what a wonderful host he was, which added to the flavour of the lip-smacking dishes that made up the elaborate spread. He came to Tehran once; I had just got married then. It was 3 a.m. and he gave me a call saying he wanted to eat *kale pache* (a specially cooked dish of lamb's head and feet—an Iranian delicacy). Being a pure vegetarian and considering the odd hour, I took him to a restaurant opposite a nightclub. Seeing him relish his food with vodka, even the owner of the restaurant was bewildered and advised me to not serve him more. When he had had his fill, I took him and deposited him in his room at the Hilton where he woke up well past noon, the next day. He called me and said, 'Let's go out somewhere to enjoy.' Such was his appetite for life. Dodging the bevy of girls waiting in the hotel lobby with great difficulty, we shoved ourselves into a car and sped off to a ski resort at Ab'ali. His close friend and co-

actor, Rajendra Kumar, was also with us. The three of us rode into the mountains on ponies, and had a great time there. He confessed to me, 'This was the best outing experience I have ever had so far.'

Along with his elegant wife, Krishna, and three children, Randhir, Rishi and Ritu, he attended the wedding ceremonies of my brother SP and mine, which happened to be on the same day. To all the guests, he announced, 'I am part of Hinduja family.' He borrowed the Gandhi cap my father used to wear and, sporting it, he posed with all of us in our wedding photographs. After him, Krishna bhabhi and her children have nurtured our longstanding family relationship and even today it continues to thrive. When we moved to London, we named our London HQ, Sangam Limited, after one of his master creations, because he was family. He lives on in our hearts: our brother, Raj.

Gregory Peck: Hollywood Actor and Friend

I met Raj Kapoor for the first time in Bombay in the mid-1970s. When you speak of Indian cinema, you speak of Raj Kapoor, an artist of extraordinary talent and energy. Producer, director, film star, editor, musician and a storyteller. Known as the greatest entertainer in Indian films, his remarkable career, over several decades, echoes the highest standards of excellence. I am pleased to pay a tribute to this great showman and to extend my warmest regards to his wife, Mrs Krishna Kapoor, and to their children who are present here tonight.

With great admiration,
Gregory Peck

May 2002

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Boris Yeltsin: Former President of Russia

When Boris Yeltsin, former President of Russia, visited India in 1993, he met Raj Kapoor's daughter, Ritu Nanda. In Ritu Nanda's words, 'I have never forgotten the reverence with which Boris Yeltsin met me. I am nobody and Raj Kapoor is dead. But the President, a man whose every minute is taken up with official engagements of tremendous importance, had still made time for me. It was clear that even for him, it was an emotional moment. His expressions spoke volumes of the admiration he had for Raj Kapoor. He said, in his childhood, he remembers wearing the classic Raj Kapoor cap, the one Raj Kapoor wore in *Awara*! I gifted him a commemorative copy of the book that Russia had printed on Raj Kapoor as a tribute to his contribution to bring the peoples of the world closer to each other through the medium of celluloid. He gave me a gift in return and signed on a copy of my book, 'I was in love with Raj Kapoor and I remember him even today.'

I was in love with
Raj Kapoor & I
remember him
even today —

Boris Yeltsin.
24/1/93

Cannes Film Festival 2002: For the first time in the history of the festival, an actor was honoured posthumously. It was also a first for any Indian actor.

Tribute by Sony Television: For an entire season, Sony Television ran a programme titled '*Showman of the Millennium*', as part of which all the films produced by Raj Kapoor were shown on the network television.

Documentaries on Raj Kapoor: Films Division of India produced *Raj Kapoor*, directed by Siddharth Kak; and Sony Television produced and telecast a documentary titled *Kehta hai Joker*, directed by Bobby Bedi.

A millennium show was organized as a tribute at Wembley, London, where eminent stars performed Raj Kapoor's songs.

A commemorative stamp on Raj Kapoor was launched by the Government of India as a tribute on 14 December 2001, his seventy-seventh birth anniversary.

Books published on Raj Kapoor include *Raj Kapoor The Fabulous Showman* by Bunny Reuben, *Raj Kapoor: Srijan Prakriya* (in Hindi) by Jayprakash Chowksey, *Raj Kapoor's Films: Harmony of Discourses* by Malti Sahai and Wimal Dissanayake and *Raj Kapoor Speaks* by his daughter Ritu Nanda (published) in Moscow by Iskusstvo Publishers.

Raj Kapoor's Films
Harmony of Discourses
Wimal Dissanayake · Malti Sahai

राजकपूर

RAJ KAPOOR
RITU NANDA

Raj Kapoor Jana Kalyan Sanstha(RKJKS)

Raj Kapoor was a man of the masses; he identified himself with the masses and was always beholden to them for his popularity. In his memory, his wife and children created the Raj Kapoor Jana Kalyan Sanstha (RKJKS), a registered charitable trust, on 14 December 2001, Raj Kapoor's seventy-seventh birth anniversary.

The first programme that the trust has initiated is to help the economically weaker sections of society by offering the Janashree Bima Yojana and the Shiksha Sahayog Yojana through the Life Insurance Corporation of India. Under the insurance scheme, at a premium of just ?100, a person below the poverty line is insured for ?20,000 in case of a natural death and ?50,000 in case of death by accident, for a period of one year. In case of a disability, he or she is insured for a sum ranging from ?25,000 to ?50,000. Under the Shiksha Yojana, scholarships are provided for up to two children per family from the ninth to the twelfth year of education at ?100 per child, that is ?200 per month, for four years.

Since its inception, RKJKS has taken 55,322 insurance covers after payment of an insurance premium of ?55.32 lakh under the Janashree Bima Yojana, and settled 218 death claims of ?61.30 lakh. Scholarships of ?31.40 lakh were paid to 3,735 students under the Shiksha Sahayog Yojana.

The trust has also donated to the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, which was used to provide spectacles to over 400 children in remote villages. The trust makes and collects donations to sustain these programmes. All donations to the trust are eligible for income tax exemption under section 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961 (vide letter no. DIT(E) 2007-08 /R/429/4051 dt. 18 March 2008). Cheques towards donations, from ?100 upwards, may be sent to the Raj Kapoor Jana Kalyan Sanstha, A-1 Friends Colony (West), New Delhi 110065.

Awards

1969: Republic Day Honour from Zakir Husain, former President of India

1971: Former President V.V. Giri presented to him the Padma Bhushan for his achievements in the field of cinema

1979: Shiromani Award (The Institute of Sikh Studies, Delhi), presented by the former vice president of India

1981: Certificate of Merit in appreciation of outstanding services rendered to the cause of peace and friendship, The Soviet Land-Nehru Award Committee, Moscow

1988: Dadasaheb Phalke Award

FILM AWARDS

1952
Awara
Certificate of Merit, International Film Festival of India, Bombay

1954
Boot Polish
Best Picture, Best Supporting Actor, Best Cinematography, Filmfare Awards

1955
Boot Polish
Special mention for acting for Baby Naaz at the Cannes Film Festival; award for music to Shankar-Jaikishen at the South East Asian Film Festival

Shree 420
Regional Certificate of Merit, National Film Awards

Raj Kapoor with his prestigious award from Karlovy Vary for Jagte Raho *in 1957*

1956
Ek Din Ratre
Certificate of Merit in the Regional (Bengali) Category, National Film Awards

Shree 420
Best Photography, Best Editor, Filmfare Awards

1957
Jagte Raho
The Grand Prix at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

1959
Anari
Best Actor, Filmfare Awards

1961
Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai
Certificate of Merit in the Regional (Hindi) Category, National Film Awards; Best

Picture, Best Actor, Best Art Direction, Best Editing, Filmfare Awards

1964
Sangam
Best Director, Best Actress, Best Sound Recordist, Best Editor, Filmfare Awards; Certificate of Merit for the Best Edited Film, Association of Film Editors, Bombay

1971
Mera Naam Joker
Best Child Artist, Best Cinematography (Colour), Best Male Playback Singer, National Film Awards; Best Director, Best Music, Best Cinematography, Best Sound Recordist, Best Playback Singer (Male), Filmfare Awards

1973
Bobby
Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Art Direction (Colour), Best Sound Recordist, Best Playback Singer (Male), Filmfare Awards; Best Director, Film Fans' Association, Madras; Certificate of Merit for Best Direction, Indian Film Directors' Association, Bombay; Superb Direction, *Shama* (Urdu film magazine); All Time Best Film, The Filmgoers Association, Bombay

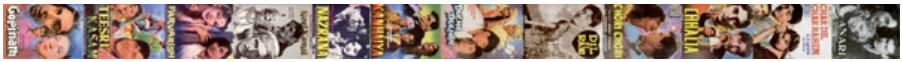
1974
Award for 'Meritorious service rendered to the Renaissance of youth consciousness in Indian, culture through films over a period of three decades', Nana Chudasama of Giants International, Bombay

1975
Do Jasoos
Best Character Actor, The Andhra Pradesh Film Journalists Association, Vijayawada

1978
Satyam Shivam Sundaram
Best Music, Best Cinematography, Filmfare Awards

1982
Prem Rog
Best Director, Best Actress, Best Editor, Best Lyricist, Filmfare Awards

1985
Ram Teri Ganga Maili
Best Picture, Best Director, Best Music, Best Art Direction, Filmfare Awards



Filmography

1935
INQUILAB

Director: Debaki Bose. Cast: Durga Khote, K.C. Dey, Prithviraj, Nawab, Raj Kapoor (as child artist)

1943
GAURI

Director: Kidar Sharma. Cast: Shamim, Prithviraj, Monica Desai, Raj Kapoor

HAMARI BAAT

Director: M.I. Dharamsi. Cast: Devika Rani, Jairaj, David, Shah Nawaz, Raj Kapoor

1946
VALMIKI

Director: Bhalji Pendharkar. Cast: Shanta Apte, Prithviraj, Neela, Baburao Pendharkar, Raj Kapoor

1947
CHITTOR VIJAY

Director: Mohan Sinha. Cast: Madhubala, Surendra, Wasti, Monica Devi, Raj Kapoor

DIL Kl RANI

Director: Mohan Sinha. Cast: Madhubala, Shyam, Badri Prasad, Munshi Khanjer, Raj Kapoor

NEEL KAMAL

Director: Kidar Sharma. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Begum Para, Madhubala, Rajendra

JAIL YATRA

Director: G. Jagirdar. Cast: Jagirdar, Raj Kapoor, Kamini Kaushal, Harish, Vikram Kapoor, Badri Prasad

1948
AAG

Producer-director: Raj Kapoor. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Nigar, Kamini Kaushal, Prem Nath

AMAR PREM

Director: N.M. Kelkar. Cast: Madhubala, Raj Kapoor, Alka Rani, Nimbalkar, Madhav Kale

GOPINATH

Director: Mahesh Kaul. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Tripti Mitra, Nandkishore

1949
ANDAZ

Director: Mehboob. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Dilip Kumar, V.H. Desai, Cuckoo

BARSAAT

Producer-director: Raj Kapoor. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Nimmi, Prem Nath, K.N. Singh
PARIVARTAN

Director: N.R. Acharya. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Motilal, Anjali Devi, Moni Chatterjee, Vasant Malini

SUNHERE DIN

Director: Satish Nigam. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Rehana, Nigar, Haroon, Heera Sawant

1950
BHANWRA

Director: G. Rakesh. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nimmi, Lalita Pawar, K.N. Singh, Hiralal, Sunder,

Ratan Kumar

BAWRE NAIN

Director: Kidar Sharma. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Geeta Bali, Vijaylaxmi, Jaswant, Pesi Patel

DASTAAN

Director: A.R. Kardar. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Suraiya, Al Nasir, Suresh, Pratima Devi, Shakila, Murad

JAN PAHCHAN

Director: Fali Mistry. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Jeevan, Shyama, Dulari, Amar, Mukri

PYAR

Director: V.M. Vyas. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Yakub, Gulam, Shyama, Nawab, Neela, Kesri, W.M. Khan

SARGAM

Director: PL. Santoshi. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Rehana, Om Prakash, David, Baby Tabassum, Paro, Radhakishen

1951
AWARA

Producer-director: Raj Kapoor. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, K.N. Singh, Leela Chitnis, Prithviraj

1952
AMBER

Director: Jayant Desai. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Agha, Baby Tanuja, Ramesh Sinha, Bipin Gupta

ANHONEE

Director: K.A. Abbas. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Agha, Om Prakash, David, Achla Sachdev

ASHIANA

Director: B. Trilochan. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Mohna

BEWAFA

Director: M.L. Anand. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Ashok Kumar, Neelam, Siddiqui

1953
AAH

Producer: Raj Kapoor. Director: Raja Nawathe. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Vijaylaxmi, Pran, Mukesh, Ramesh Sinha, Bhupendra Kapoor, Leela Mishra

DHUN

Director: Kumar. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Motilal, Kumar, Pramilla, Kamal Mehra

PAAPI

Director: Chandulal Shah. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Dulari, P. Kailash, Maruti, Ramesh Thakur

1954
BOOT POLISH

Producer: Raj Kapoor. Director: Prakash Arora. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Baby Naaz, Ratan Kumar, David, Veena

1955
SHREE 420

Producer-director: Raj Kapoor. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Nadira, Lalita Pawar, Bhudo Advani, M. Kumar, Hari Shivdasani, Nana Palsikar

1956
CHORI CHORI

Director: Anant Thakur. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Johnny Walker, Pran, Gope, Amir Bano

JAGTE RAHO

Producer: Raj Kapoor. Directors: S. Mitra and A. Moitra. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Pradeep Kumar, Sumitra Devi, Smriti Biswas, Pahari Sanyal, Sulochana Chatterjee

1957

AB DILLI DUR NAHIN

Producer: Raj Kapoor. Director: Amar Kumar. Cast: Romi, Sulochana, Yakub, Anwar, Motilal

SHARDA

Director: L.V. Prasad. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Meena Kumari, Shyama, Anita Guha, Agha, Raj Mehra

1958

PARVARISH

Director: S. Banerjee. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Mala Sinha, Mehmood, Lalita Pawar, Radhakishen

PHIR SUBAH HOGI

Director: Ramesh Saigal. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Mala Sinha, Rehman, Leela Chitnis, Mubarak

1959

ANARI

Director: Hrishikesh Mukherjee. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nutan, Lalita Pawar, Motilal, Shubha Khote, Mukri

CHAR DIL CHAR RAHEN

Director: K.A. Abbas. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Meena Kumari, Ajit, Nimmi, Shammi Kapoor, Kumkum

DO USTAD

Director: Tara Harish. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Madhubala, Shaikh Mukhtar, Sulochana, Daisy Irani

KANHAIYA

Director: Om Prakash. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nutan, Om Prakash, Raj Mehra, Lalita Pawar, Raaj Kumar

MAIN NASHE MEIN HOON

Director: Naresh Saigal. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Mala Sinha, Mubarak, Nishi, Dhumal, Maruti

1960
CHHALIA

Director: Manmohan Desai. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nutan, Pran, Rehman, Shobhana Samarth, Raja

JIS DESH MEIN GANGA BEHTI HAI

Producer: Raj Kapoor. Director: Radhu Karmakar. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Padmini, Pran, Tiwari, Nayampalli, Chanchal, Raj Mehra, Lalita Pawar

SHRIMAN SATYAWADI

Director: S.M. Abbas. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Shakila, Mehmood, Nazir Hussain

1961
NAZRANA

Director: Shridhar. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Vyjayanthimala, Usha Kiran, Agha, Savita Chatterjee

1962
AASHIQ

Director: Hrishikesh Mukherjee. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Padmini, Nanda, Abhi Bhattacharya, Mukri, Leela Chitnis

1963
DIL HI TO HAI

Directors: P.L. Santoshi and C.L. Rawal. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Nutan, Agha, Pran, Savita Chatterjee

EK DIL SAU AFSANE

Director: R.C. Talwar. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Waheeda Rehman, Lalita Pawar, Sulochana Chatterjee

1964
DULHA DULHAN

Director: Ravindra Dave. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Sadhana, Agha, K.N. Singh

SANGAM

Producer-director: Raj Kapoor. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Vyjayanthimala, Rajendra Kumar, Raj Mehra, Nana Palsikar

1965
TEESRI KASAM

Director: Basu Bhattacharya. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Waheeda Rehman, Dulari, Iftekhar, Asit Sen

1967
AROUND THE WORLD

Director: Pachhi. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Rajshree, Pran, Raj Mehmood, Om Prakash

DIWANA

Director: Mahesh Kaul. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Saira Banu, Kanhaiyalal, Lalita Pawar, Kamal Kapoor, Ulhas, Ravindra Kapoor

1968
SAPNON KA SAUDAGAR

Director: Mahesh Kaul. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Hema Malini, Jayant, Tanuja, Achla Sachdev

1970
MERA NAAM JOKER

Producer-director: Raj Kapoor. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Padmini, Ksenia Ryabinkyna, Simi Garewal, Rishi Kapoor

1971
KAL AAJ AUR KAL

Producer: Raj Kapoor. Director: Randhir Kapoor. Cast: Prithviraj Kapoor, Raj Kapoor, Randhir Kapoor, Babita

1973
BOBBY

Producer-director: Raj Kapoor. Cast: Rishi Kapoor, Dimple Kapadia, Pran, Prem Nath, Prem Chopra, Aruna Irani

MERA DESH MERA DHARAM

Director: Dara Singh. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Dara Singh, Meena Rai

1975
DHARAM KARAM

Producer: Raj Kapoor. Director: Randhir Kapoor. Cast: Raj Kapoor,Randhir Kapoor, Rekha

DO JASOOS

Director: Naresh Kumar. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Rajendra Kumar, Shailendra Singh, Bhavna Bhatt

1976
KHAN DOST

Director: Dulal Guha. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Shatrughan Sinha, Mithu Mukherjee

1977
CHANDI SONA

Director: Sanjay Khan. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Sanjay Khan, Parveen Babi

1978
NAUKRI

Director: Hrishikesh Mukherjee. Cast: Rai Kapoor, Rajesh Khanna, Deven Verma

SATYAM SHIVAM SUNDARAM

Producer-director: Raj Kapoor. Cast: Shashi Kapoor, Zeenat Aman, Padmini Kolhapure

1980
ABDULLAH

Director: Sanjay Khan. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Sanjay Khan, Zeenat Aman

1981

BIWI-O-BIWI

Producer: Raj Kapoor. Director: Rahul Rawail. Cast: Sanjeev Kumar, Randhir Kapoor, Poonam Dhillon

1982
GOPICHAND JASOOS

Director: Naresh Kumar. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Zeenat Aman, Prem Chopra, I.S. Johar

PREM ROG

Producer-director: Raj Kapoor, Padmini Kolhapure, Shammi Kapoor, Raza Murad

VAKIL BABOO

Director: Asit Sen. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Shashi Kapoor, Zeenat Aman, Rakesh Roshan

1985
RAM TERI GANGA MAILI

Producer: Randhir Kapoor. Director: Raj Kapoor. Cast: Rajiv Kapoor, Mandakini, Divya Rana, Saeed Jaffrey, Raza Murad, Kulbhushan Kharbanda

CHOR MANDALI

Director: C.L. Rawal. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Asha Parekh. (*Filmed, but not released*)

UMEED

Director: Naresh Saigal. Cast: Raj Kapoor, Shammi Kapoor, Pooja Saxena. *Partly filmed*)

HENNA

Director: Randhir Kapoor. Cast: Rishi Kapoor, Zeba Bakhtiar

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A special mention of gratitude is due to my husband Rajan Nanda for backing me and being with me on this journey through its most trying moments. For continuous, unending support which is not always easy to enlist, I am grateful to Nitasha Nanda, Nikhil Nanda, Shweta Nanda, Dushyant Mehta, Suman Sehgal, Anuj Bahri, Sharad Gupta, Shantanu Ray Chaudhuri, Bidisha Srivastava, Yugesh Gupta, Rahul Singh, Rakesh Dadwal, Arun Soni, Sunita Bansal, Sunny Abraham, Manoj Srivastava, Sajit, Riti Srivastava, Mangla, Pramod, Shammi Kanojia, Madan Arora and Sumeet Pasricha.

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publication.

About the Book

Raj Kapoor was an acknowledged patriarch of Indian cinema. He was also an extraordinary showman, a lover, an idealist, a sage and a reformer. As a producer, director, actor, editor, composer and story-teller par excellence, his command over the medium led him to produce some of the most watched films anywhere in the world, films that have enthralled generations of viewers.

Raj Kapoor didn't just have perfect comic timing, he had historic timing too. He didn't just make films; he made the mainstream Indian film audience before the term 'Bollywood' was even a glint in a marketer's eye. Working within the cinematic tradition he inherited, he modified it, added new elements, and produced a distinctive, seductively romantic and immensely popular oeuvre.

He was India's greatest cultural ambassador. His films were an ideology – if one can call them that – of emotions and entertainment. He dressed his social concerns and messages with wit, music, romanticism and melodrama and had an uncanny awareness of the pulse of the audience. There can be endless debates about Raj Kapoor's exact contribution to film-making, but few can deny that he was the greatest entertainer Hindi cinema has ever had.

About the Author

Raj Kapoor: The One and Only Showman is a tribute to the legend by his five children – Randhir Kapoor, Ritu Nanda, Rishi Kapoor, Rima Jain and Rajiv Kapoor – produced by R.K. Films and Studios. It is a unique experiment, both an autobiography and a biography. The autobiography uses his own words, culled from interviews, journals and anecdotes, to provide an intimate glimpse into the mind of a genius. In all fairness to Raj Kapoor, his thoughts and words have neither been interpreted nor rewritten, but only compiled and edited. The biography is an attempt to record for posterity the lesser-known facets of his magnificent personality through the recollections of his family, colleagues and friends. Every incident speaks of Raj Kapoor's mind. Presented by his daughter Ritu Nanda and lovingly put together by his children, the book is a complete study of the great showman and will keep his memory and spirit alive forever.

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